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THE SECRET PLAY



RALPH HENRY BARBOUR

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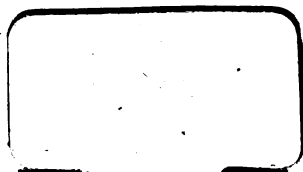
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THE SECRET PLAY

By Ralph Henry Barbour

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“Ecstatic youths . . . were capturing the players and raising them shoulder-high.”

THE SECRET PLAY

BY
RALPH HENRY BARBOUR

AUTHOR OF "THE LUCKY SEVENTEEN"
"AROUND THE BEND," ETC.



ILLUSTRATED BY
NORMAN P. ROCKWELL

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THE SECRET PLAY

CHAPTER I

"THE COACHLESS WONDERS"

A BLUE runabout chugged blithely along Troutman Street, in the town of Clearfield, one afternoon in mid-September, honking hoarse warnings at the intersections of other thoroughfares and rustling the yellow and russet leaves, which, because of an unprecedentedly early frost two nights before, had already sprinkled the pavement.

In the car, clutching the wheel with an assumption of ease somewhat belied by the frequent frowns of anxiety which appeared on his face, sat the proud owner, Richard, or, as some of us already know him, Dick Lovering. Dick was seventeen years of age tall, nice-looking, with dark eyes and hair and a lean face a trifle more pallid than one would expect on the driver of an automobile. But Dick hadn't had that runabout very long, only about

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a fortnight, in fact, which accounted for his anxiety at street crossings and corners and, possibly, for the lack of healthy color in his face.

The car was painted a deep and brilliant blue, and, appropriately enough, had been dubbed by its owner "Eli Yale," answering, however, quite as readily to "Eli." Its varnish was as yet unmarred by scratch or blotch and its brass shone resplendently. To make no secret of it, the car had been presented to Dick by the members of the Clearfield Baseball Club at the completion of a successful season which had netted the club much money. Dick had been the manager and had conducted affairs so capably that the gift was well-deserved. The car had been bought at a bargain, having been used but a few days by its previous owner, and was proving a wonderful blessing to Dick, who was very far from being wealthy enough to purchase such a luxury himself. Dick, you see, was not as well able to get about as other boys, for he had been a cripple all his life. You'd never have suspected it to see him guiding Eli around the corner of B Street, for to all appearances he was quite a normal and healthy lad. But had you looked on the running-board at the left of the car you'd have seen a pair of crutches

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secured there, crutches without which Dick was quite unable to get around, or had been until the blue automobile had appeared on the scene.

Morris Brent, who had owned the car first and whose reckless driving of it had resulted in an upset and a broken leg, had initiated Dick into the science of running it and had found him a clever pupil, but the latter had not yet gained complete confidence and skill, and so when, just as he was passing the first house on his right after leaving Troutman Street, his name was called loudly and unexpectedly, Dick, glancing startledly about, unintentionally opened the throttle and Eli fairly bounded forward and was a quarter of the way down the block before Dick could bring him to a stop. When the brake was set and the driver, sighing with relief, looked back along the tree-bordered street he saw a short and somewhat stout youth waving and pursuing. Fudge Shaw—his real name was William, but everyone outside his family had forgotten the fact—arrived panting and laughing.

“That was a b-b-bully stop!” he gasped. (Fudge had an entertaining habit of stuttering in moments of excitement.) “Going out to the field, Dick?”

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"Yes. Climb in."

Fudge, attired in football togs, seated himself with a grunt beside the other, slammed the door and beamed about him. Fudge had very blue and very round eyes, so round that he constantly wore an expression of pleasant and somewhat excited surprise. He also had a good deal of sandy-red hair. He was ambitious to make the High School Football Team, was Fudge, and since Spring had refused all entreaties to have his hair cut. Viewing that mop of hair one would have doubted the necessity of the head-guard which he dangled in one hand.

Dick started up again and traveled cautiously yet briskly through B Street, but not until he had everything adjusted to his liking and one hand on the bulb of the horn did he indulge in conversation, although Fudge, unperplexed by problems of gears and levers, chattered busily.

"Gordon promised to stop for me," he confided, "but he didn't, and I didn't know it was so late. I was writing."

Fudge paused as though inviting curiosity. Eli said "Honk! Honk!" hoarsely before he chugged across Main Street, and Dick asked, "Another story, Fudge?"

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Fudge nodded carelessly. “Yes, and it’s going to be a peach. It—it’s a detective story, Dick. I meant it to be just a short one, but it’s turning out to be quite long. I guess it’ll be a regular novel before I get through with it. Detective stories are lots of fun to write. Maybe I’ll read some of this to you some time, Dick.”

“Thanks,” replied the other gravely. “What’s it about, Fudge?”

“Oh, about a murder and a peach of a detective chap named ‘Young Sleuth.’ You see, this old codger Middleton was found murdered in his library, surrounded by oodles of money. There was only one window in the room and that was all barred over with steel bars. And there was only one door and that was locked on the inside and they had to break it open. How’s that for a situation? You see, having his money all scattered around showed that he wasn’t killed for that, don’t it? And the barred window and the door locked on the *inside*—get that, Dick? On the *inside*, mind you!—thickens the plot a bit, eh?”

“Rather!” agreed Dick, anxiously viewing a buggy half a block ahead. “How did the murderer get in, Fudge?”

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"Why, you see—well, I haven't worked that out yet," he confessed. "I've just got to where the old millionaire's beautiful daughter sends for 'Young Sleuth' to unravel the mystery and bring her father's murderer to justice. It's going to be a peach of a story, all right!"

"Sounds so," returned Dick, sighing with relief as the buggy turned to the right into Common Street. "You must read it to me when you get it finished. It wouldn't be a bad idea to get 'Young Sleuth' to work for us here, Fudge, and find a football coach."

"That's right! Isn't it the limit for Farrell to leave us like this? I hope they turn him down good and hard when he comes back in the Spring and wants to coach the nine again!"

"I guess he couldn't do anything else, Fudge. Farrell's all right. You or I'd do the same thing probably if we got word that our mother was very ill in Ireland and wanted to see us. We'd do just as Joe did; pack up and go back there."

"Maybe," agreed Fudge. "But it leaves us in an awful hole, doesn't it? Lanny White says he doesn't know where to look for a new coach, and it's pretty late, too. Mr. Grayson told him he

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guessed we'd better try to do without a coach this Fall. Just as if we could!"

"I suppose it would be hard," said Dick. "Gordon said that Lanny had heard of a man in Bridgeport."

"He didn't pan out," replied Fudge. "He was a man Bert Cable knew, but he hadn't ever coached a football team. Now Lanny's after a chap in Westport. He coached Torleston High a couple of years ago. It's a bum outlook, say what you want. Lanny's going to make a dandy captain, but he can't coach too. No one could. There's the First Team, and the Scrub Team and the Third Squad. Maybe if Lanny didn't do any playing himself he'd get by all right, but what's the good of a captain who doesn't play? Besides, he's too good a half-back to lose."

"It's too bad," observed Dick sympathetically as, having turned into Common Street, he now drew the runabout to the side of the road where a gate appeared in the high board fence surrounding the athletic field. "By the way, where are you going to play, Fudge?"

"Me?" Fudge grinned. "Oh, I'm out for a guard position, but I'll play anything they'll let me."

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I'm versatile, I am, Dick! Say, honest, do you suppose Lanny'll give me a show?"

"If you show him," laughed Dick. "Seems, though, you might be a bit inexperienced for the First, Fudge."

"I don't expect to get on the First—this year. I want to make the Scrub Team. They say you get a lot of fun on the Scrub. Experience, too. They can't say I'm too light, anyway!"

"No, you're not that," agreed Dick as, having stopped the engine, he secured his crutches, placed the tips on the ground and swung himself from the car in the wake of Fudge. "Hope you have luck, anyway."

Once past the gate Fudge, with a startled "They've begun, Dick!" scurried off, leaving Dick to make his way toward where a small group of fellows were standing along the side line watching the first practice of the season. Returning greetings, Dick paused and looked around him. The gridiron had been freshly marked out and the creamy-white lines shone brilliantly in the afternoon sunlight against the green turf. Down near the west goal the First Squad was jogging about in signal practice in charge of Chester Cottrell, last year's quarter. Dick noted

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that, as composed this afternoon, it was made up entirely of last year's first and second string players; Grover, Horsford, Cable, Haley, Kent, Wayland, Toll, McCoy, Hansard, Cottrell and Felker. Two of the regulars were absent from the squad; Lanny White himself, whom Dick soon espied working with the green candidates, and Morris Brent, who last year had played fullback in one or two of the principal games and was this Fall the logical candidate for the place. Doubtless, though, Dick reflected, Lanny was keeping Morris out of the game on account of his injured leg. Morris's folks had strongly objected to the boy's taking part in football this season and had appealed to the doctor to support them. The latter, however, to everyone's surprise, especially Morris's, had declared that he didn't believe kicking a football around would hurt that leg. It was evident, though, that Lanny wasn't going to take chances, for Dick saw Morris, sweated, hands in pockets, speedily following in the wake of the Third Squad with Lanny. The Scrubs were having practice by themselves at the east end of the gridiron, and Dick wondered who was in charge. With the idea of finding out, he made his way leisurely along the side line and, after traversing a few yards, was overtaken

THE SECRET PLAY

by George Cotner, the manager, a squarely built and stocky youth of eighteen with an alert countenance.

"Hello, Dick," greeted Cotner. "Come out to see the Orphans play?"

"Is that what you call them?" asked Dick.

"That or the Coachless Wonders," was the smiling response. "Isn't it the dickens about Farrell? Mean trick to play on us, I say."

"Oh, I guess he didn't mean to play any trick. Guess he'd much rather have stayed here in Clearfield and coached the team than have been called home to see his sick mother."

Cotner shrugged his shoulders. "If he *was* called home," he said.

"Well, wasn't he? That's what I heard. What do you mean?"

"I mean that Joe wasn't getting much money here, as you probably know, Dick, and he's a pretty good coach. His contract expired this Fall and it hadn't been renewed. The Athletic Committee was ready to renew it, but Joe didn't show up. Then came that letter saying his mother was ill in Ireland and he was going home to visit her. It just occurred to me that maybe his mother was another school

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somewhere and that he was after more money.”

“Oh, I don’t think that of Joe,” answered Dick, shaking his head. “Joe was always terribly loyal to Clearfield, George. Besides, he could easily have told the Committee if he thought he wasn’t getting enough salary.”

“Yes, and the Committee would have told him that he was getting all the school could afford to pay him. Well, I don’t know anything about it, more than I’ve been told, but that idea occurred to me. Lanny’s worried stiff about it. He’s had three different men on the string and not one of them has been landed. Two wouldn’t think of the job at the salary and the third had never done any football coaching. That was Bert Cable’s man, a fellow over in Bridgeport named Mooney. I guess we’d been moony if we’d taken him. It’s tough on Lanny, though. He’s trying to look after three squads at once and doesn’t really know what to do with any of them. And now Grayson is making a talk about getting along without any coach at all! And some of the grads on the Committee are more than half agreed with him. They say we haven’t much money and what we have we ought to use in fixing the field up and building a new grandstand. Wouldn’t that jar you? Fancy

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trying to turn out a winning eleven without a coach! And this is our year to beat Springdale—if we're ever going to do it again."

George Cotner scowled across the gridiron a moment and then continued with his grievance. "We've got pretty fair material this year, too, Dick, and we ought to come out on top, especially if Morris Brent comes around in good shape and turns out the drop-kicker and punter he threatened to be last year. But we ought to have a good coach to look after him. Lanny's afraid to let him practice for fear something will happen to his bum leg again, and afraid to keep him out of practice for fear he won't get in shape for Springdale. Even if Lanny could coach the First Team, there ought to be someone to look after the others. There's the Scrub down there running around like chickens with their heads off, going through signals when they ought to be handling the ball and learning the a, b, c's. Harry Partridge is trying to captain them, but he doesn't know anything about it. He's a good guard, but he's never had any responsibility and he's terribly unhappy right now. Besides, hang it all, we ought to be mapping out a campaign. But when I tell Lanny that he looks wild and runs his hands

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through his hair and says he has all he can attend to without bothering with plans. Why, if we had——”

But Manager Cotner’s speech was rudely interrupted by a football which, wandering erratically off the field, collided violently with the small of his back. By the time he had chased it and returned it at a round-arm throw to Pete Robey he had lost the thread of his discourse. The Scrub Team trotted past at that moment and Dick answered the waving hand of Gordon Merrick who was playing right half on that eleven.

“Want to see you after practice,” called Gordon. “Don’t go away. Important!”

“Me, too!” shouted Will Scott. “I want a ride home just as much as he does, Dick!”

Dick laughed and turned again to George Cotner who was ruffling the leaves of the red-covered memorandum book he carried. “It seems to me,” he said, “that some one of the graduates ought to come out and coach.”

“Sure, but there aren’t any; any who know football well enough to teach it, I mean. And that isn’t all, either. A coach has got to know how to get the work out of the fellows, and he’s got to be able to plan like a—like a regular planner, and scheme like

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a regular schemer. Take Joe Farrell, now. Joe isn't exactly a brainy fellow, and he isn't what you'd call well-educated, but, by Jove, Joe used to have the whole season all mapped out long before practice began. When he started he knew just what he was going to work for, and he worked for it. And got it—usually."

"Oh, he was all right," Dick agreed. "Wish he was coming back. I suppose, though, if he does come it'll be too late for this season. Do you mean, George, that there isn't a high school graduate in Clearfield able to coach the team? It doesn't sound possible."

"Well, name one! Name one and I'll go and fetch him out here. All the good players have gone away, I guess. Lanny and I got a catalogue the other day and went through the *alumnæ* and couldn't find a football man in the lot; no one we knew anything about, anyway. Of course, we might get some of the fellows who are in college to come back for a few days at a time and help, but that wouldn't cut much ice. No, sir, you've got to have someone in charge, someone at the head. Even if he doesn't know an awful lot of football he's *there*; if you see what I mean."

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“I understand,” said Dick. “Wish I could think of someone.”

“So do I. Wish I could. Just to show how things get by when there’s no one around to take charge, look at the dummy.”

“I don’t see it,” responded Dick, his gaze traveling across to where the two uprights and cross-bar stood empty.

“That’s just it. If Farrell had been here the dummy would have been up and ready for use. I never thought of it. Neither did Lanny. He told the First Squad to go over and tackle and when they got there there was nothing to tackle. It’s stowed away in the gym.”

“Life is indeed filled with woe, George,” laughed Dick.

“Well, it is,” grumbled the other, smiling a little nevertheless. “Lanny jumped on me because the old thing wasn’t hung.”

“Well, as manager of the football team—” began Dick slyly.

“Oh, I know. I ought to have seen to it. But there you are. I never had seen to it and didn’t think of it. Everything’s the same way. We haven’t got balls enough, we’re short of blankets and—and

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everything! I'm going to resign if we don't get a coach inside of a week!"

"I dare say you will have one," said Dick soothingly. "Someone will turn up, you'll see."

"Where from?" grunted George. "Maybe you'd like the job, Dick?"

"Why, I don't know," replied the other thoughtfully. "Perhaps—perhaps I should, George. I might think it over."

Cotner laughed, and then, seeing Dick's sober countenance, said hurriedly: "Well, I dare say you could do it, by Jove! The fellows tell me you managed that baseball club to the King's taste, Dick. Still, I don't suppose you know much football."

"No more football than baseball, George, and I've never played either."

"No, of course not." George shot a puzzled glance at him. "Well, you knew enough baseball, it seems. As far as I'm concerned, I'd be mighty willing to see you try it, Dick!"

"Thanks. Maybe if no one else turns up I'll apply for the position." Dick ended smilingly and George Cotner wondered how seriously the other meant what he had said.

"After all," he said doubtfully, and apparently

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with a desire to be pleasant, “a coach doesn’t need to have been any great shucks himself as a player. It’s—it’s brains and—leadership that do the business, I guess.”

“They help, I fancy,” replied Dick, gravely. “I think Lanny is yelling for you, George.”

CHAPTER II

DICK RECEIVES AN INVITATION

CLEARFIELD is a fairly typical New England mill town, lying some two miles in from the coast. Doubtless the early settlers had been attracted by the water power to be derived from the river which flows around the town on the north. Certainly, they could not have been influenced by æsthetic or sanitary considerations, for the town occupies what must have been in their time a more or less level meadow a few feet above the river and a very few more above the sea, and, aside from the possibility of good drainage—which probably never occurred to them—those first residents of the future Clearfield found few natural advantages and little of the picturesque. To be sure, northward and westward the country breaks into low hills and is attractive enough, but a distant view of those hills

DICK RECEIVES AN INVITATION

could scarcely have made up for mosquitoes and malaria, for Needham's Mill, as the first settlement was called, was surrounded by marsh.

However, the Clearfield of to-day is no longer Needham's Mill. The marshes have disappeared—although it is still no uncommon thing to strike a peat-bed when excavating for a cellar—and there is a small-sized city of some seventeen thousand inhabitants, with broad, well-shaded streets, some fine buildings and many manufactories. Clearfield is famous for its knitting mills, but has divers other industries as well. The railroad crosses Mill River from the north, and the trains stop at a new and commodious station, post-card pictures of which you can purchase at Wadsworth's Book Store and at Castle's Pharmacy. It is no longer quite correct to say that the river flows around the town, for within the past ten or fifteen years the town has crossed the river and the larger mills and the boat-yards are built along the stream in what is known as the North Side and which is reached by two well-built bridges. Clearfield is served by a trolley system, and, if one wants to reach the shore he may step into a big yellow-sided car at Town Square and be whisked to Rutter's Point, where the summer hotel and the cottages face

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the ocean, in a very few minutes. The Common, a square of turf bisected by paths and set with benches and a band-stand, occupying a block in the older part of town, is the center of the business section. Facing the Common are Clearfield's best and newest business blocks and the Town Hall and the post office, and it was toward the Common that Dick Lovering conducted Eli and Gordon Merrick at the conclusion of football practice.

Gordon was fifteen years old, a very live-looking boy with clean-cut features, dark hair and eyes and a well-built, athletic figure. He and Dick were very good friends, and on the way in from the field they had found so much of strictly personal interest to discuss that after Dick had drawn up before the post office he remembered, while Gordon had gone inside for some stamps, that the latter had quite neglected to mention the important matter he had alluded to at the field. Tom Haley, a big, powerful-looking boy of sixteen who played center on the school team, stopped to talk a moment. Tom was pessimistic to-day.

"Lanny had us doing signal work most of the afternoon," he said. "He's putting the cart before the horse, Dick, for half of us can't handle the ball

DICK RECEIVES AN INVITATION.

yet without dropping it. When are we going to get someone to coach? Heard anything about it?"

"I heard to-day that Lanny was trying to get a man in Westport who has been coaching Torleston High School. That's all I know, Tom."

"I suppose it'll be hard to find anyone as late in the season as this. Well, I guess it's no affair of mine. Glad it isn't. How's Eli running?"

"Like a clock," replied Dick warmly. "He's a fine little car. I'd take you home, Tom, but I've got Gordon with me. He went in the post office."

"Thanks, that's all right. I'd like a ride sometime, though, Dick. I've never been in one of those things."

"Well, I never had until a couple of weeks ago," laughed Dick. "I'll get you to-morrow and take you out to the field if you like, Tom."

"Will you? You bet I'd like it! Much obliged. It'll be out of your way, though. You know I live over by the railroad."

"I know, but Eli doesn't mind the cars!"

Tom smiled as he nodded and went on, and Gordon hurried out of the post office. "Sorry to keep you waiting," he said as he jumped back into the

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car. "There was a mob at the stamp window, though."

"What was it you wanted to see me about?" asked Dick as he turned the car cautiously about and narrowly escaped a corner of a coal-wagon.

"About Mr. Grayson," replied Gordon, relaxing his clutch on the side of the car as the danger was averted.

"What has he been doing, Gordie?"

"It's what he's going to do. He's going to have a birthday next month."

"Think of that!" marveled Dick. "I didn't suppose high school principals ever paid attention to anything so—so frivolous as birthdays!"

"I don't know that he does," laughed the other, "but some of the girls are. Hasn't Louise Brent said anything to you about it?"

"No. I haven't seen her for a couple of days."

"You haven't! What's the matter? Haven't quarreled, I hope." Gordon's tone was vastly concerned.

"No, but I've been busy. Stop your kidding and tell me what you are trying to get at."

"Well, the girls—quite a lot of them, mostly seniors, I think—want to give Mr. Grayson a present

DICK RECEIVES AN INVITATION

of some sort on his birthday. You know he's pretty popular with the ladies, Dick."

"What's it going to be? A sofa-pillow?"

"No, you idiot! What the girls want to do is get up a purse, collect a lot of money, you know, and refurnish his office for him."

Dick whistled. "That *would* be a lot of money! He certainly needs new furniture, though. But the question is whether Mr. Grayson is popular enough with the fellows, Gordie."

"Oh, he's not a bad old scout, Dick. Of course, he's always been rather down on athletics——"

"Hold on now! Let's be fair. He hasn't been down on athletics, Gordie. He merely thinks that we fellows pay too much attention to it. He's not—not awfully sympathetic, but it isn't fair to say that he's against it. Now go on, and pardon the slight digression."

"All right; he's not what I said. Anyhow, I think most fellows like Grayson pretty well. They ought to. He's awfully fair and—and decent, even when he gives you fits about something."

"I trust he has never had occasion to give you fits," said Dick gravely.

Gordon grinned. "Well, we've had one or two

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slight misunderstandings," he replied cheerfully. "But I don't hold it against him."

"That's sweet of you. I hope you've told him so."

"Oh, dry up and listen. And don't wobble the car about so! It gives me heart-failure. That's what Morris did the day we went through the fence."

"Your conversation is so absorbing that it quite takes my mind from the car," replied Dick. "Perhaps you'd better wait until I get you home."

"All right, seeing that I'm most there—if nothing happens. There's Fudge on the porch." Gordon waved and Fudge shouted something unintelligible and Eli chugged around the corner of Troutman Street and drew up at the Merricks' gate. "Come on in a minute," said Gordon.

"No, you sit right here and unfold your tale. I'll put the brake on hard so Eli won't run away. There! Now what's the scheme and what must I do about it?"

"Well, they wanted me to talk to you about it first; the girls, I mean. They seemed to think you had a certain amount of sense. I don't know why they thought so, but——"

"Never mind the compliments, Gordie. You tell

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them that I am with them heart and soul and think it's a fine idea. Now, what is it?"

"Well, they want to do the thing quietly, you see; keep it a secret."

"I don't just see how they can," Dick objected, "if they mean to raise money by subscription."

"Keep it a secret from Mr. Grayson, I mean, you idiot! They want to get the things and then smuggle them into the office when he's out."

"They'll have trouble keeping it dark, I'm afraid," said Dick seriously. "Someone's almost certain to let it out."

Gordon nodded. "That's what I said, but your sister——"

"Is she one of the conspirators?" asked Dick.

"Yes. She said she was certain none of the girls would tell and so it would be up to the fellows. And of course I had to stand up for my sex, Dick, and tell her that none of us would let it out."

"I don't see why I haven't heard something about all this," mused Dick.

"You have—now. The girls were keeping it quiet until this morning. Nell Sawin called me up on the telephone after breakfast and told me and said I was to speak to you about it and make you come to-night."

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"Come where to-night? Your talk is wonderfully lucid, Gordie."

"To Louise's house," laughed Gordon. "There's to be a sort of meeting of the—the——"

"Criminals," prompted Dick.

"Ways and means committee, or something. Just a few of the girls and you and Morris, naturally, and Lanny and me. Will you come?"

"Yes, of course. Hold on, though! To-night? I don't believe I can, to-night, Gordie. You see school opens to-morrow and I haven't really done a thing yet."

"That's all right. No one has. Anyhow, it won't take long and you can go home afterwards and study as much as you like. They especially want you there, Dick. In fact, I don't dare to show up without you!"

"Well, if that's so I'll go," laughed Dick. "Joking aside, though, I like the scheme. Mr. Grayson is a fine man, Gordie, even if he does happen to be a principal, and it will be a mighty nice thing to show him we think so. I don't believe the school has ever done anything like this for him since he came here. If it has I've never heard of it."

"Nor I. How long has he been here, I wonder?"

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"Must be fourteen or fifteen years. He came as assistant to old Mr. Flagg, who's superintendent of education now. I suppose Mr. Grayson can't be much over fifty, Gordie, but I'm so used to thinking him an old man that it seems as if he was somewhere about seventy."

"I suppose he really isn't so dreadfully old," said the other. "I dare say most of the fellows will be glad to chip in and get him a present."

"How much money will it take?" asked Dick.

"I don't know. I suppose the idea is to get as much as we can and buy accordingly. If every student gave a dollar——"

"Some of them won't give a quarter," replied Dick. "Lots of them can't afford to."

"Well, if only half of them gave a dollar apiece——"

"Don't count your chickens before they're hatched, Gordie. And pile out now; I've got to get home to supper. What time does this conference take place? Do I have to 'doll up' for it?"

"Of course not. They didn't say what time. About half-past seven, I suppose. Ask Grace."

"I might do that," agreed Dick, as Gordon vacated his seat. "See you later then. Get up, Eli!"

CHAPTER III

A DISCOURAGED CAPTAIN

THE Brents lived in a fine, large house two blocks beyond Gordon. Mr. John Brent was Clearfield's richest and most influential citizen, and "Brentwood," as his estate was called, was quite the most luxurious in town. The house stood back from the street in a full block of land, and tonight, as Dick and his sister Grace, a pretty, dark-haired girl of thirteen, approached it from the gate, lights shone from many windows and it looked most imposing. As the evening was mild, Louise Brent, hostess for the occasion, assembled her guests on the big screened porch at the side of the house which was much more like a room than a veranda. There were gaily-colored rugs on the floor, many comfortable wicker chairs, a table that held a broad-shaded electric lamp, and plants in tubs and boxes.

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When all had gathered the chairs were filled and Morris Brent, Louise's brother, removed a plant from a willow stool and took its place, trying, as Gordon said, to look like a begonia!

Morris was a handsome, finely built boy of sixteen. He was sometimes accused of snobbishness, but in justice to him it should be said that his snobbishness was more apparent than real. Being the only son of John Brent had always made it a little difficult for Morris to win acceptance amongst the fellows on his own merits. Louise resembled Morris but little. While, like him, she was tall, unlike him she had a very fair skin, hair that was more nearly yellow than brown, and blue eyes. Her prettiness was due more to her expression of sweetness and animation than to her features. She was a year younger than Morris.

The other girls of the party were Grace Lovering, Nell Sawin and May Burnham. Nell was sixteen, a round, good-natured girl whom everybody liked, and May Burnham was fourteen, slim, dark and quiet. She was a cousin of Louise's.

Lansing White completed the quartette of boys. Lanny was sixteen, having reached that mature age within the past fortnight, a lean, capable-looking

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youth with flaxen hair and eyes so darkly brown that at first glance they seemed black, an illusion probably due to the contrast with the very light hair. He was perhaps the most popular boy in high school, and his popularity was not entirely due to his athletic prowess. He had the fine faculty of making friends instantly and keeping them afterwards. There wasn't a kinder-hearted or more thoughtful fellow in town than Lanny White, and if he had an enemy no one knew it. Lanny was captain of the eleven, caught on the nine and was a sprinter of no mean ability.

It was May Burnham who explained the project, since it was she who had originated it, and afterwards they all discussed it. Mr. Grayson's birthday fell on the twenty-fifth of October, and, as Morris pointed out, they had only some five weeks in which to prepare for it. Louise read from a list the articles necessary to a thorough refurnishing of the Principal's office at the High School. There must be a new rug, a flat-topped desk, a swivel-chair, an easy-chair, a straight-backed chair, a revolving book-case and a filing-cabinet; although, as Louise explained, the latter wasn't so important since the one now in use was in good condition.

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"Only," she said, "we thought the other furniture ought to be mahogany, and the filing-cabinet there now is oak and it would look sort of funny, I suppose, with the other things."

"How much would all that cost?" asked Lanny anxiously.

"We don't know exactly. We can get the furniture from a New York store where papa buys things and they will give it to us at a discount."

"How much of a discount?" asked Dick.

"Thirty per cent.," replied Morris. "That would make quite a difference. Read the prices we figured, Louise."

"Rug, sixteen dollars," announced his sister, referring again to the paper; "desk, forty-five; revolving book-case, twelve; swivel-chair, twelve; easy-chair, twenty; straight chair, five; filing-cabinet, eighteen. Total, one hundred and twenty-eight."

There was a moment's silence. Then Gordon whistled expressively. Dick shook his head.

"That's a lot of money to have to get in four weeks," he said.

"Five," said Morris.

"Well, five, if you like, Morris, but we'd probably

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have to pay for the things before we got them and it would take a week to get them here, I guess."

"There are nearly three hundred students in school," said Grace Lovering, "and if each only gave fifty cents we'd have a hundred and fifty."

"I know, but some won't give anything—a few won't, that is—and some will give nearer a quarter than a half."

"And a lot will give a dollar," protested Nell Sawin. "I'm going to give two dollars, and so is May, and Louise says she will give five!"

"Let's start the list now," said Louise. "Get some paper, Morris, and a pen, won't you? I think either Dick or Lanny ought to head it."

"I'm afraid I can't give more than a dollar," said Dick. "So perhaps someone else had better start it."

"You do it, Louise," suggested Gordon. "Five dollars will look pretty good at the top of it."

"I thought of that," said Louise, "but we were afraid it would look as if we expected everyone to give as much. And of course we don't want anyone to give more than he feels he can afford."

"It's up to Lanny, then," said Morris, returning with paper and pen. "Who's going to write this, and what do you want to say?"

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"You do it," replied his sister. "Just write 'The undersigned agree to subscribe the amounts set against their names for the purpose—the purpose——'"

"For the Twenty-fifth of October Fund," suggested Dick. "Better not put it down on paper. And I'd add that the subscriber hereby promises to keep still about it."

"Good idea," commended Morris, writing under the lamp. "How's this, then? 'Subscription List. The undersigned agree to subscribe to the fund known as the Twenty-fifth of October Fund the sums set down against their names, and hereby promise not to divulge the purpose of said fund.'"

"A good many 'funds' in it," objected Lanny.

"Let's hope so," replied May, with a laugh. "Don't be critical. I think it's lovely, Morris."

"All right. Here's the pen, Lanny. Put your 'John Hancock' on the first line."

"Your slang pains me, Morris," murmured Lanny. "It's only going to be two dollars, folks."

"*Only* two dollars!" said Gordon. "Gee, that's a lot! Who's next? You are, Dick."

Dick signed and the list went to Louise and then

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to Morris, the latter duplicating his sister's subscription.

"Seems to me," said Morris, as he handed the pen to May Burnham, "May should have headed it. She started the trouble."

"Of course!" agreed Louise. "Perhaps there's room above Lanny's name. Is there?"

"Yes, but I'd rather not," replied May. "I'll write here, and"—she looked around almost defiantly—"I believe I'll say three instead of two!"

"Then I will!" exclaimed Nell. "We don't have to pay for four weeks, do we?"

"We'd ought to pay when we sign, I think," said Dick, "but I can't, and so I don't insist."

"Neither can I," said Lanny. "Who's next? Has Gordon signed? Be a sport, Gordie, and put down a hundred!"

"I'm doing it," answered Gordon, "only I'm putting a dot where it will do the most good."

When the list was finally returned to Louise that young lady exclaimed delightedly, "Why, we've got twenty-one dollars already! Isn't that fine?"

"Enough to get the easy-chair!" said Nell. "Why, at this rate it won't take us any time to get it all!"

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"Maybe the others won't be so enthusiastic, though," replied Gordon. "By the way, were those prices you gave the prices we'll have to pay for the things, Louise?"

"Why, no! We forgot that! We won't have to pay nearly so much, will we? Thirty per cent. of one hundred and twenty-eight is—is——"

"Thirty-seven-forty," said Morris.

"Thirty-eight dollars and forty cents," corrected May. "Then we will have to pay only about—about ninety dollars! That's lovely!"

"Say a hundred, to be on the safe side," advised Dick. "I guess we can manage that. The question is now, how are we going at it? Wouldn't it be well to have several lists and——"

"Have four," said Lanny. "You take one and Gordon will take one——"

"Thank you!" muttered Gordon.

"And Louise and Nell can have the other two."

And so it was arranged, in spite of Gordon's lack of enthusiasm, and that necessitated the making of four new lists with two signatures on each.

"I want to see you destroy that first subscription of mine," announced Lanny. "If I had to pay two dollars twice I'd be broke all the Fall!"

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"Observe, then," replied Morris. "Across and across! There! Now let's have those eats, Sis."

While they devoured the sandwiches and cake and lemonade that Louise brought in a minute later they elected that young lady Treasurer of the Fund, appointed her and Morris and May a Committee on Purchase and finally broke up, Dick declaring that since school began in the morning he believed it would be a good idea to glance at one or two books. After saying good night to the others, he and Grace took their departure, followed a few minutes later by Lanny, Gordon, May and Nell. Having escorted the girls to their homes, Lanny and Gordon walked back together to B Street. Quite naturally, their conversation had to do with football affairs, and Lanny confessed that he was getting pretty discouraged.

"Mr. Grayson says we ought to get along without a coach and use what money we'd pay one to repair the grandstand and the fence. There isn't a bit of good spending money on that grandstand, Gordon. We need a new one. And I just wish Grayson had my job awhile! He'd find out what a lot of fun it is to turn out a football team without a coach. I put my name down for two dollars for

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a present to him, but 'I think I'd a heap rather kick him in the shins sometimes!'

Lanny's laugh, however, threw doubt on his assertion.

"We play Highland Hall Saturday, don't we?" asked Gordon.

"Yes. Highland doesn't trouble me any, though. We could beat her with the Scrubs. But Locust Valley comes the Saturday after, and those fellows have a mighty good team as a usual thing. I don't suppose it would hurt us to get beaten. Might be a good thing. Still, if you're captain you sort of like to have a clean slate, if you can."

"Have you heard from the man at Westport? Cotner said you were after someone there."

"Not yet. I don't even know that he's still there. I don't suppose he will want to come, anyhow. We can't pay enough to make it worth his while. It's a shame we can't have a graduate coaching system, as Springdale has. She doesn't seem to have much trouble getting coaches. That chap Newman who has been coaching her for three or four years is a dandy. I'll bet she'll beat us again this year; maybe worse than she did last!"

"Don't you believe it, Lanny! Cheer up and hear

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the birdies sing! Things will turn out all right in a few days. You see if they don't."

"Hope so, I'm sure. I'm willing to do my level best, but I can't be captain and coach and everything else. We've got a poor lot of new men this Fall, too. And then there's Morris's leg to worry about. The doctor says he can play and Morris says his leg's all right, but if we go to work and build up the team around his kicking and then he has another injury to it or his father says he can't play we'll be in a nice fix! We've got to develop a couple of punters somehow, but I'm sure I don't know where to look for them. Wayland isn't so poor, but he doesn't seem to get the hang of it. Well, good night, Gordon. Sorry I've bothered you."

"That's all right," laughed the other. "It will do you good to get it off your chest. You'll find, though, that the fellows will all work harder, Lanny, if they've got it to do. And—and I'll tell you what I'll do."

"Spring it!"

"I'll bet you the sodas at Castle's that we have a coach within a week."

"Take you! I'd buy Castle's whole soda fountain if I could get a coach that way. Good night!"

CHAPTER IV

LOUISE HAS AN IDEA

CLEARFIELD played Highland Hall Military Academy four days later and it is safe to say that practically the entire juvenile population of the town turned out to see the first football game of the season. Perhaps the weather had something to do with the size of the audience that filled the grandstand and overflowed on the field, for there was a zest and a snap to the air that hinted overcoats, and the sun played hide-and-seek behind the scudding gray clouds. Brent Field, as the High School athletic grounds are called, is only a scant block and a half from the river and when the wind is from the northwest, as it was this afternoon, the few scattered buildings between field and river afford but little protection.

Highland Hall had brought along most of its

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Fourth Year Class—the Academy regulations forbade members of other classes accompanying the teams away from school—and the forty-odd boys looked very fine and manly in their cadet-blue cape-coats, below which tan-gaitered legs twinkled. They assembled at one end of the stand and gave their team a lusty welcome when it trotted on the gridiron, waving their blue-and-blue banners proudly. The dark blue and light blue of the flags was repeated in the costumes of the players, and their sweaters held the letters H. H. M. A. cunningly arranged, the first H taking the form of a football goal and the other letters appearing in the space under the cross-bar. But, in spite of the neat attire of players and supporters, Highland Hall was no dangerous adversary. The fellows, as Fudge explained to Gordon, were allowed only two hours a day for recreation and were coached by the Commandant, a grave martinet of a man who knew more of military tactics than football. Fudge and Gordon were seated on the bench, after a ten-minute workout, and Fudge, who had more flesh than he needed, was still breathing hard from his exertions.

“That’s the coach over there,” he said, nodding across the gridiron. “He’s a terror, they say.”

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"You have a cousin at Highland, haven't you?" asked Gordon. "Is he here to-day?"

"No, he's only in the Second Year Class, and they don't let any but the Fourth Year fellows go away from school. They're strict as anything. I'm glad they didn't send me there. Dad wanted to, but ma and I were dead against it." Fudge grinned reminiscently. "I told ma I didn't think I was strong enough for it."

"Fudge, you're a fakir," said Gordon cheerfully. Fudge was starting to deny this indignantly when Lanny White, returning from the center of the field where he had won the toss-up, summoned the players.

"All right, fellows," said Lanny. "They kick-off and we take the west goal. Get into it, now, and let's get the drop on them!"

"Now let's see who's who," murmured Gordon as the team trotted out and spread over the west end of the field. "Haley, center; Cable and Kent, guards; Horsford and— Hello, Will Scott's playing right tackle! What's the matter with Wayland?"

"Sick; has tonsilitis or something. Who's that going to play left end, Gordie?"

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"Jim Grover; and Toll is right end, Cottrell, quarter, Lanny and Rob Hansard, halves, and Felker, fullback. I guess that's about the way we'll line up in the Springdale game, barring accidents; only, of course, Way will get in, and Morris Brent." Gordon leaned forward and spoke along the bench. "Aren't you going to play, Morris?"

Morris shrugged the shoulders under the purple sweater he wore. "I don't know," he answered. "Maybe in the last quarter."

Gordon nodded. "Hope so," he said. And then, to Fudge: "Lanny's not taking any chances with Morris, is he? There's the whistle!"

Lanny got the kick-off and, unaided by interference, raced back nearly twenty yards before he was stopped. Clearfield set to work with the few plays she had ready, simple attacks from a tandem formation in which the runner relied more on speed and force than deception. Two first downs were gained and then a fumble necessitated a punt, and Felker, who was called on, booted the ball almost straight into the air and Clearfield not only lost possession of the pigskin but some eight yards besides.

Highland started in with a will. She used a wide

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open formation and on the first play attempted a double pass which, had it succeeded, would have netted much territory. But, perhaps more by good luck than good management, Jack Toll nailed the runner near the side line for a scant two-yard gain. A second attempt, a forward pass straight over the middle of the line, went better and Highland made her distance easily. An involved play in which quarter faked a kick and then passed to a halfback for a run around the short side, only resulted in the ball being taken in about where it had gone into play. A plunge at tackle on the left gained three yards and, with six to go on third down, Highland punted. The ball was well handled and well kicked and Cottrell got it behind his goal and touched it back. On her twenty yards Clearfield started her advance once more and carried almost to midfield before she was again forced to punt.

This time Felker did better, although the ball covered but a scant twenty-five yards. Highland, failing to gain at center, returned the kick and the ball was Clearfield's on her forty-five yards. Rob Hansard got away around right end for a first down and on the next play repeated the performance for four more. Lanny made the distance off left

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tackle. The Blue-and-Blue was proving weak at her wings and Lanny wisely continued the assault at those positions. Both he and Hansard got around without much difficulty until the ball was on the opponent's twenty-yard line. Then Lanny was nailed for a five-yard loss, and Cottrell, faking a forward pass, tossed the ball to Felker and that youth banged his way straight through the middle of the enemy's line for twelve yards. From there, in three plays, Clearfield took the ball over, Hansard securing the touchdown. Cable missed the try-at-goal.

The first quarter ended after the kick-off, the score 6 to 0.

The second period saw one more score for the home team. Highland fumbled on her forty yards and Cottrell picked up the ball and tore off fifteen yards before he was stopped. A fake forward pass with the ball going to Lanny failed to gain, but Felker smashed through for four and Hansard barely gained first down by sliding off right tackle. Felker fumbled but Lanny recovered for a two-yard loss and then skirted the opponent's left end for a touchdown in the corner of the field. The punt-out placed the ball directly in front of goal and

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just back of the fifteen-yard line, and this time Bert Cable had no difficulty in negotiating the extra point. For the rest of the period Clearfield played on the defensive and kicked frequently, and the half ended with the ball in Highland Hall's possession on her own forty-three yards.

Dick watched the game from the grandstand in company with Louise Brent, who, like most of the High School girls, was an ardent football lover. Between the halves, however, Louise abandoned the game long enough to announce the progress of the Fund.

"It was forty-three dollars and sixty cents this noon, Dick," she said. "That isn't bad, but I thought we'd have lots more by this time. The girls have done heaps better than the boys. They've given almost two-thirds of the total. Do you think the boys really dislike Mr. Grayson; many of them, I mean?"

"No, but most of the younger fellows don't have much spending money, Louise, and I suppose they think they need sodas and candy and such things more than Mr. Grayson needs a new desk!" Dick smiled at his companion's expression of disapproval. "They'll fall into line in the end, though, I guess.

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Gordon told me last night that most of the fellows he has been after have only given twenty-five or fifty cents."

"Well, you've done beautifully," said Louise.

"I've bullied the chaps," laughed Dick. "Anyway, it's easier to get money from the seniors. They've got more, in the first place, and then they're more willing to give it up. Some of the younger boys have it in for Mr. Grayson for one reason or another, I suppose. We'll get the full amount finally, I think. It would be a lot easier if we didn't have to be so secret about it. We could call a meeting some day at recess and pretty nearly get the whole amount, I'll bet. But it would surely get around if we did that and Mr. Grayson would hear of it."

"Yes, and half the fun will be in surprising him," said Louise. "We're going to take Miss Turner into the secret and she will let us into Mr. Grayson's office the night before his birthday. Won't it be exciting?"

"Terribly," agreed Dick. "Imagine us tiptoeing in there in the dark, you carrying the desk and May the revolving book-case and Nell the—the arm-chair——"

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"No, don't let her take the arm-chair," begged Louise. "She'll be sure to set it down and go to sleep in it. What are you going to carry?"

"I thought I'd take the small chair," replied Dick gravely. "I'm very unselfish, you see. I leave the larger honors to the rest of you."

"Yes, larger and heavier," laughed the girl. "There they come again! Do you know, I sort of half wish Highland Hall would score, Dick? They're such nice-looking boys, and their uniforms are so stunning!"

"They've certainly got us beaten on appearance," said Dick. "Hello, Lanny's sending the same fellows back."

"Shouldn't he?"

"There's no law against it, only, with a lead of thirteen points, it seems to me it would be a good chance to let some of the subs smell gunpowder. I guess he knows what he's doing, though."

"I do hope he has a successful season," said Louise. "I like Lanny, and he always works so hard at everything that he deserves to win."

"He's pretty well handicapped just now. The team really does need a coach, and the Athletic Committee didn't make any kind of a popular hit with

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the school when it decided against paying for one the other night. The fellows blame Mr. Grayson for that, by the way, and I suppose that's one reason why they don't subscribe more liberally to the Fund. There's a wretched kick-off for you!"

"Did Bert Cable do that, Dick? I thought he usually kicked splendidly."

"He does the best he can considering that he doesn't think it worth while to cock the ball any," replied Dick dryly. "Bert evidently thinks that pile of sand out there is to look at. If he'd tee the ball up properly and— Good work, Clearfield!"

Kent, the purple-legged right guard had broken through and smeared Highland's play behind her line, and an approving cheer arose from the stand. Highland tried an end run and made four yards and then attempted a forward pass which failed. With almost ten yards to go, she got a fine long punt away and her ends raced up the field under it and, undisturbed by the wretched attempt at interference put up by the Clearfield backs, nailed Cottrell in his tracks. For six of the ten minutes constituting the third period Highland, playing desperately, held her opponent away from her goal line. Then a fumble by Lanny worked to Clearfield's advantage,

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for Chester Cottrell recovered the ball as it trickled back, dodged a plunging Highland forward, put an end out with a straight-arm and suddenly found himself clear. That run began on Clearfield's thirty-seven yards and would certainly have resulted in a touchdown had not Cottrell, in evading a tackle by the opposing quarter, slipped one foot across the side line. Although Cottrell kept on and landed the ball under the cross-bar, and although Clearfield expressed its delight with much shouting, the referee called the ball back and put it in play on Highland's twenty-three yards. The Blue-and-Blue won the admiration of friend and foe alike then, for she disputed every inch of the ground and Clearfield won her first down only after the hardest work and by a margin so slim that the linesmen had to trot in with the chain and measure the distance. Lanny's attempt on the next play to circle the opponent's left wing failed and Felker could make only three yards through the line. With seven to go on the third down, Lanny and Cottrell put their heads together and Lanny called in Morris Brent.

The ball was then almost opposite the center of the goal and on the ten-yard line. Morris dropped

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back to kicking position, swung one sturdy leg experimentally and held up his hands. Highland, shouting, "*Block it! Block it!*", poised, ready to break through. Then back shot the ball. Morris barely caught it as it tried to pass over his head. Before he could get back into position the Blue-and-Blue was on him. Wisely, he made no effort to kick, for the ball would surely have been blocked, but instead ran back and desperately attempted a forward pass to Grover. The ball, however, grounded and there was a minute of time during which Highland tried to persuade the referee that the pass was illegal, that Morris had purposely grounded the ball to save a loss of territory. But the official decided that the play had been fair and the teams lined up on the twenty-one yards and again Morris walked back. The chance of scoring by drop-kick was pretty slim now, for the kicker was near the thirty-yard line and Highland had just demonstrated her ability to break through. But Morris did it. The pass was straight and breast-high and the ball left his toe quickly and surmounted the upstretched hands of the leaping enemy. There was an instant of doubt as the pig-skin seemed to hesitate at the bar, but it went over,

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although by inches only, and Clearfield's thirteen points became sixteen.

As the teams lined up again for the kick-off Morris retired once more, receiving an ovation as he walked to the bench. Nelson Beaton took his place for the few seconds remaining. Then the whistle blew and the third period was at an end.

When the teams faced each other again on Clearfield's thirty yards substitutes were much in evidence. Jones was in place of Grover, Arthur Beaton for Haley, Tupper for Hansard and Kirke for Cottrell, and Felker was back at full. Highland Hall, too, had run new men on. Clearfield started rushing again and was soon past the center of the field. Kirke, the substitute quarter, got his signals mixed then and there was a ten-yard loss, and Clearfield kicked. Highland caught the ball on her twenty-five-yard line and came back twelve, the Purple's ends showing up poorly. In the next scrimmage Beaton, Clearfield's substitute center, received a blow on the head and retired in favor of Pete Robey. Pete had been trying for guard position and the duties of center rush were none too familiar to him, and, in spite of Lanny's coaching, he was very weak on defense. Twice Highland made big

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gains through him before the secondary defense came to his assistance. Near the middle of the field Highland was forced to punt and Tupper fumbled on his twelve yards, recovered, tried to advance by a run across the field and was finally stopped for no gain. A fake-kick play with Felker taking the ball for a try around left end resulted in a loss and Felker kicked on second down. Highland signaled fair-catch and held the ball on Clearfield's thirty-seven yards. A forward pass went diagonally to the right end and that youth plunged through half the Clearfield team before he was forced out near the twenty-yard line. The blue-coated adherents of the visiting team cheered lustily and implored a touchdown.

A wide end run gained a scant three yards and took the ball well over to the Clearfield side of the gridiron. Another forward pass was tried but was incompleated, and, with seven to go on third down, the Highland right tackle fell out of the line and walked back to about the thirty yards, while the quarterback knelt in front of him and patted the turf.

"I hope he makes a goal," declared Louise Brent, in the grandstand.

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"He won't this time," answered Dick, as Highland arranged her men to protect the kicker. Louise looked a question. "Highland has two downs yet," he continued, "and that angle is almost impossible for anyone but a Brickley. They've made our fellows spread out and open their line and they'll either snap the ball to that fellow who pretends he is going to place-kick and he will try a forward or the ball will go to one of those backs for a run straight through the middle. At least, that's the way I size it up. We'll see now."

As Dick ended the ball shot back from center into the hands of the second back from the line and that youth put down his head and sprang straight ahead and went through for all of five yards before the secondary defense stopped him. Once more Highland Hall cheered loudly, and, almost before they had ceased, the Blue-and-Blue had added another three yards by an attack on right tackle and had gained her first down and shifted the ball a good twelve feet nearer the center of the field. The play was just inside the home team's ten-yard line now and Clearfield supporters were hoarsely commanding the defenders of the east goal to "Hold 'em!" The time-keeper trotted on to an-

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nounce two minutes left as the Highland quarterback piped his signals again. A half was sent hurtling against the left of Clearfield's line for a scant yard, and a plunge at center, with quarterback carrying the ball, netted but two more. Again the tackle stepped back, this time apparently for a dropkick, since the quarter did not accompany him, and again the defenders spread their line. The angle to the goal was by no means impossible now and the watchers held their breaths as the teams crouched.

"Block this!" implored Lanny. "Block this kick!"

"Watch for a fake!" counseled Kirke shrilly from between his goal-posts. Then came the signals, a halfback moved slightly forward, the ball shot back to the outstretched hands of the waiting tackle and the teams sprang together. The tackle's long leg swung, and a few of the opponents who were cut off from sight of the ball, leaped into the air, but there was no thud of ball against shoe, for the tackle stepped nimbly to the right, poised the pigskin and hurled it straight and hard across the battling lines to where an undetected back had stolen around and behind the goal line. Though frenzied hands strove to intercept the ball, it settled into the catcher's

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hands and stayed there while he was hurled to the ground two yards back of goal.

Perhaps the blue flags weren't waved then as the cape-coated squad sprang to their feet and hurled joyous shrieks to the sky! And perhaps that crafty back wasn't thumped and hugged when he was at last pulled to his feet! For Highland had done what she had never done before in ten years of Clearfield contests; she had crossed the Purple's goal-line!

Disgustedly, Clearfield lined up under her goal as the ball was taken out for the try, and still more disgustedly she saw it pass a minute later straight over the bar, while Highland Hall shouted and waved riotously. Over at the score-board the small sophomore who officiated there smeared out the figure 6 after "Highland Hall" and, protest in every movement, chalked up a big white 7.

Clearfield tried to take revenge in the remaining sixty-odd seconds and fought desperately, but the time was too short and the last whistle blew with the ball in Highland's possession near her thirty yards.

"I'm glad they scored," said Louise a trifle defiantly as Dick put his crutches under his arms pre-

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paratory to descending the stand. "They deserved to, didn't they?"

"Yes," Dick agreed doubtfully. Then he repeated the word ungrudgingly. "Yes, they did deserve to, Louise. Any team deserves to win who is smart enough to take advantage of its opponents' mistakes. And that is what Highland Hall did."

"That," responded Louise, as they waited for the aisle to clear, "sounds as if you thought the others didn't really earn that score, Dick."

"I didn't mean it to. Highland earned her touchdown, all right. Profiting by the other fellow's mistakes is more than half the game."

"But I thought our boys played a very good game," objected Louise loyally.

"Far be it from me to dispute you," replied Dick, with a smile.

"But didn't they?" she insisted. "Of course, Dick, I don't know very much about such things, but I want to learn. Didn't they play well?"

"Clearfield," answered Dick, "was at least twenty-four points better than Highland Hall, Louise. She won by the score of sixteen to seven. As Mr. Grayson says, I invite your consideration."

"Oh!" said Louise. "What was the matter, Dick?"

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"Well," replied the other, as he stumped cautiously down the steps, "it's the general who watches the battle through a pair of field glasses who sees best what's going on. Clearfield needed a general. It was a good fight on Clearfield's part, but there was an unnecessary loss of lives!"

"Oh, you mean we needed a coach!"

"Badly," said Dick.

"Then—then why don't you do it?" exclaimed Louise. "Dick! Why don't you?"

"Oh, you mustn't think that just because I can criticize I could have managed that game any better," laughed Dick. "Almost anyone can be a critic, but football coaches are a scarce article, Louise."

"Just the same, I believe you could, Dick! And I think it's funny Lanny hasn't thought of it!"

"I don't," Dick replied. "I'd think it funny if he did, considering that I've never played it and have to toddle around on a pair of sticks!"

"That has nothing to do with it," replied Louise convincingly. "I shall speak to him about it right away. Isn't it perfectly fine that I thought of it?"

CHAPTER V

DICK CONSENTS

SOMETHING very much in the nature of an indignation meeting was held on the High School steps on Monday at recess. There were no prepared addresses, nor did parliamentary rules govern the meeting, but free speech was in order and liberally indulged in. Lanny was not present, but the football element was well represented, and it was Morris Brent, for once holding views coincident with popular sentiment, who most heartily condemned the Athletic Committee for their decision regarding the employment of a salaried football coach. Morris, munching an apple on the top step, proclaimed indignantly that the Athletic Committee of the Clearfield High School didn't care a bone button whether the team got beaten or not.

“What kind of a team do they think we can turn

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out without a coach?" he demanded, addressing the throng in general but frowningly regarding Toby Sears, Senior Class President. "Who's going to look after the physical condition of the fellows? Why, along about the middle of the season we'll have a hospital list as long as my arm! The trouble with that Committee is that they're a lot of old grannies!"

Sears shrugged his shoulders and replied a bit resentfully: "Well, you needn't blame me for it! I'm not on the Committee. Tell it to Wayland and Scott and those who are."

"You can't blame them for it, either," said Pete Farrar. "They were outvoted. Will Scott told me so. Wayland couldn't go to the meeting because he was sick. And, anyhow, with only three undergraduates against four grads and faculties, what can you do?"

"That's so," said someone else. "We ought to be better represented. It would be fairer to have as many undergrads as grads."

"Don't see as it makes much difference, anyhow," observed Sears. "Lanny White told me Saturday that some man he was after had turned us down and that he didn't know where to look next. So,

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even if the Committee hadn't decided against a coach, it wouldn't have made any difference. There isn't anyone to get."

"Well, we've got to have someone," insisted Morris, aiming his apple-core at the rubbish barrel and missing it badly, "even if he's not much of a coach. Lanny can't run the First Team and the Scrub and look after the new fellows too. No one could. Besides, who ever heard of a football team without a coach?"

"It seems to me," said Pete Robey, "that there ought to be some grad who could do it."

"That's what I say," agreed Sears. "There must be, too, if we'd look for him. Of course he might not know a lot of football, but he'd be better than nothing, I dare say."

"It's Grayson's fault," said Bingham, a tall, bespectacled sophomore. And Bingham, as unpopular a boy as there was in school, for once found support.

"I'll bet it is," muttered another, between mouthfuls of sandwich. "He's always been down on football."

"And everything else we've ever tried to do," supplemented Bingham with a vindictive glare through

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his thick lenses. "And here we are asked to subscribe——"

"Shut up!" growled Pete Robey. "Can't you keep your silly mouth shut when you're told to?"

Bingham subsided, muttering peevishly, and George Cotner arrived at the foot of the steps just as Morris began again: "I say what we ought to do is stand up for our rights," he declared with dignity. "If we just told the Committee that we had to have a football coach and meant to have one they'd come off their high horse. After all, whose money is it they're so careful of? Isn't it as much ours as theirs?"

"Of course it is," said Pete Farrar. "We earned it!"

"How much did you earn?" asked Manager Cotner sarcastically as he approached the storm center.

"Well, that doesn't matter," replied Farrar. "I mean that we fellows earned the money at baseball and football and things. And I dare say I earned as much of it as you did, Cotner."

"Which is none at all," answered George calmly. "You fellows are making a heap of noise about nothing, if you only knew it."

"How is that?" asked Sears.

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"We've found a coach," replied the manager coolly.

Exclamations of surprise and curiosity came from the gathering. "Who is he?" "Where'd we get him?" "Who said so?" "Bet you're fooling, George!"

"Not at liberty to tell you just yet," replied Cotner, enjoying the sensation. "In fact, the matter is not absolutely settled——"

"Thought so! Knew you were lying!"

"—But it will be this afternoon. Then you'll hear all about it."

"Where's he come from?" demanded Morris.

George hesitated, and then, "Right here," he answered.

"Clearfield? Do we know him?"

"Yes."

"Is he a graduate?"

"No."

"Then it's Mr. Cochran, of the Y.M.C.A."

"Get out!" said Morris. "He wouldn't leave a job like the one he's got to coach us."

"He could do it without giving up his job, couldn't he? Isn't it Cochran, George?"

"It is—not."

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"Then who——"

"I told you I couldn't tell you, didn't I? So don't ask. You'll know this afternoon—or to-morrow."

"I'll bet he's a frost, whoever he is," Morris Brent grumbled.

"Who found him? Lanny?"

"Er—no, not exactly." George Cotner smiled. "I don't know who found him, exactly, although I think I was the first one to suggest him. Oh, you'll be surprised all right, fellows!" He chuckled at the bewildered expressions on the faces of the others. "I'll tell you one thing, though, just to keep you interested; he's never played a game of football in his life!"

A howl of derision went up. "Now we know you're lying, George!" declared Sears.

"Maybe it's Mr. Grayson," sneered Bingham, and a laugh went up at that and the gathering broke up in better humor as the gong summoned them back to work.

As a matter of fact, the school at large did not learn the identity of the new coach that afternoon, for at nine o'clock that evening the candidate for the honor was still holding off. He sat in the little parlor of his home on E Street, a pair of

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crutches beside him, and listened doubtfully to the insistence of Lanny White, George Cotner and Gordon Merrick.

"There's no use in your saying you can't do it, Dick," declared Lanny, "because you can. We understand that you don't know football as well as Joe Farrell does, and of course you've never played it, but you do know a lot about it theoretically and you've followed the game for years. What we want is someone in authority, even if he doesn't know everything and can't get into togs himself, and you're just the fellow, Dick. Every chap on the team would be tickled to death to take orders from you. Look at the way you had us crawling around on our tummies last summer when you managed the nine! Hang it, Dick, you've just got to do it! There's no one else, I tell you!"

"Lanny's right," said George earnestly. "What we need is a fellow who can sort of sit up aloft, as it were, and see how things are going and tell us when we're making mistakes. And we need to get up a plan of battle, too, work out a campaign. Why, as it is now, we're just going along from game to game and trusting to luck. Lanny can't play football and coach too."

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"Be a good fellow, Dick," urged Gordon.

"I won't deny," replied Dick, "that I'd like to try it. As you say, I've never played the game, but I have watched it and I do know the rules and I have got theories. And—and maybe I could get the fellows to do what I say. But—well, look here, now; suppose I did take hold and my ideas of coaching a team proved all wrong and we came an awful cropper at the end of the season? After all, I've never done it and it would be a risky sort of an experiment, Lanny. My football may not be the sort that succeeds, you see."

"We'll risk it, Dick. And we'll promise that whether we lick Springdale or get beaten we'll never make a whimper."

"But what about the other fellows?" asked Dick, with a smile.

"The other fellows?"

"Yes. They'd want to mob me."

"Nonsense! Why, look here, even Farrell can't turn out a winning team for us every year, Dick. I'm not saying you're the finest football coach in the country, but, by George, you're the only chap I know of to-day I'd be satisfied to work under! Now what do you say, Dick?"

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"And, look here, Dickums," said Gordon, "you want to remember that we can't hire a coach if we can find one. It's up to you!"

"Where would I find time to study or do any work?" asked Dick irresolutely. "If I went into this I'd want to go in with both feet."

"Of course you would!" responded George encouragingly. "But a couple of hours in the afternoons from now to the eighteenth of November wouldn't matter."

"Do you think two hours a day was all that Joe Farrell gave to football?" asked Dick grimly.

"Well——"

"Say, Lanny, who put this into your head?"

Lanny grinned sheepishly. "Louise Brent," he answered. "But she said she was surprised I hadn't thought of it myself, and, by Jove, Dick, so I am!"

"I thought of it a week ago, didn't I, Dick?" asked George eagerly. "Remember that first afternoon of practice? I asked you then——"

"No post-mortems, George," said Lanny. "That's settled then, eh, Dick?"

Dick smiled ruefully and gazed a moment at his crutches. "How would I look," he asked, "driving a team on those things?"

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"You'd look fine!" declared Lanny. "And you could do it!"

"Perhaps," laughed Gordon, "you could follow the team in Eli!"

Dick smiled, and then asked: "There's no money in this, is there?"

"I'm afraid not," replied Lanny. "The Committee——"

"That's the way I'd want it. I wouldn't dare take any money for doing it, fellows. If I made a mess of it I'd feel bad enough if I was doing it for nothing, but if I was getting paid for it I'd feel as if I'd cheated you. Now, one more thing, Lanny. If I do—er—coach, it's got to be understood that I *am* coach."

"You mean that——"

"That I'm in authority. That what I say goes. It may sound cheeky, considering that I'm a green-horn, but it's the only way for me to have any show at making good."

"That's all right, Dick. You say the word and you're It from this moment. And if the way I play doesn't suit you you can put me on the bench to-morrow. Is it a bargain?"

"Fellows, I'm an awful fool, I suppose, but——" he paused again.

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"Say it, Dick!" exclaimed George, with a grin.

"I want you to know that—that I appreciate your confidence in me," went on Dick, "and I'll do the best I know how."

"Good boy!" cried Lanny, seizing Dick's hand and pumping it enthusiastically. "Now I feel as if I could play some football! Honest, Dick, I've been too worried to even try!"

"Do I—do I begin my duties now?" asked Dick soberly.

"Of course! I suppose the Committee will have to approve, but they'll do that, all right."

"Then," said Dick, "I'll issue my first order."

"Shoot!" laughed Lanny.

"Very well. The First Squad is disbanded."

"Eh?" gasped Lanny.

"What?" exclaimed George.

"Also the Sub Team and the Third Squad," continued Dick calmly. "To-morrow at three o'clock all candidates will report to me on the field dressed to play."

"What—what's the idea?" asked Gordon.

"We're going to start over," returned Dick quietly, "and any fellow who wants a place on the team *has got to work for it!*"

CHAPTER VI

THE NEW COACH TAKES HOLD

DICK LOVERING'S selection to mold the destinies of the Clearfield High School Football Team did not meet with universal approbation. It would have been strange if it had. Dick, handicapped as he was by his physical disability and far too busy a youth to mix in many of the school interests, had, after all, but a limited circle of personal acquaintances, and those who knew him only by sight and reputation were inclined to be dissatisfied. There was no animosity toward Dick, but it was felt that to put a boy who had never played the game and had had no practical experience at the head of football affairs was, to say the least, a hazardous experiment. Some fellows went farther and declared that it was idiotic.

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"Dick Lovering's all right," they said, "but he's a cripple, and even if he knew how to coach the team, he couldn't do it on crutches! Wait till you hear Springdale laugh at us when they hear it!"

Those who really knew Dick, on the other hand, hailed his choice with satisfaction. Perhaps Tom Haley voiced the general sentiment of this faction as well as anyone. "I don't care a bit," he said, "whether Dick knows a football from a baked potato. If Dick undertakes to coach the team he'll do it and do it well. I never saw the thing yet that Dick couldn't do when he made up his mind to it. And there isn't a fellow in school who can make what he says go as Dick can. We may not beat Springdale this year, but if we don't it won't be Dick's fault!"

But whether the school in general approved or disapproved, the matter was already beyond them by the time they heard of it officially, which was the noon following George Cotner's announcement on the steps. For Lanny had begged speedy action by the Athletic Committee and a hurried meeting had been held in Mr. Grayson's office at eleven o'clock. Curtis Wayland, who at Lanny's solicitation had risked the doctor's displeasure and at-

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tended as one of the three undergraduate members, informed Lanny afterwards that there had not been a dissenting voice and that Mr. Grayson had been highly pleased. "The selection of one of your own kind, an undergraduate, a—a fellow with no taint of professionalism," he declared, "is right in line with my theory that schoolboy sports and athletics should be conducted by schoolboys and not by hired mentors. I approve heartily, and I congratulate White and the others on the good sense they have displayed. And I wish Richard Lovering and the team all success."

The news was received with incredulous surprise and at first the authenticity of it was doubted by those not in the secret. Succeeding surprise, came amusement, approbation or disapproval according to the conviction of the person. At all events, the matter created an excited interest that drove practically the whole student body to the field that Tuesday afternoon. Those who went to scoff, however, found little opportunity. They saw Dick's blue auto standing at the end of the grandstand near the big gate and discovered Dick himself, wearing his honors very modestly, swinging about on his crutches in a quiet and businesslike way, for all the world

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as if he had been coaching football teams all his short life.

But there was plenty of matter for surprise, however. Instead of the usual spectacle of three squads practicing independently of each other, they found all the candidates, new and old, experienced and inexperienced, democratically jumbled together and performing the most elementary tasks!

Clearfield on the side lines was amused, to say the least, at the spectacle of fellows like Haley, Cottrell, Cable and even Lanny White himself, fellows who had played for one, two and even three years on the First Team as regulars or substitutes, passing the ball to each other, falling on it, and practicing starts and performing similar kindergarten feats! Had it not been for this humorous aspect, the spectators would have found practice that afternoon distinctly uninteresting. There was no punting, no line work, not even dummy practice. For a solid hour and a half Clearfield's football heroes, proved and incipient, went through the veriest drudgery and, on the whole, did it cheerfully. Those of the audience who most disapproved of the new coach had to acknowledge grudgingly that, at least, Lovering had the courage of his convic-

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tions. And many marveled that the regulars accepted the afternoon's duties so uncomplainingly. But those who marveled had not, of course, been present in the dressing-room when Dick had made his short speech to the assembled players.

His appearance had been greeted with a welcome that must have pleased him, although if it did he failed to show it. He was very quiet, very business-like, very terse. "First of all, fellows," he announced without preliminary rhetoric, "it must be understood that you and I are here for just one thing. That's to get together a team that will beat Springdale. If we can win other battles, well and good. If we can't, well and good. In order to beat Springdale we've got to play regular football, fellows, and in order to do that we've got to learn how. Some of you know more football than others, but I'm not going to take your words for it. To-day you are all on the same level and we are going to start all over, just as if this was the first day of practice and you hadn't already played one contest. There's no First Squad, no Scrub Team, no Third Squad yet. Every fellow has got to show me what he can do and for the next two or three days you will all have to go back to elementary work. Those of

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you who aren't willing to do that had better tell me now and empty your lockers. There's going to be plenty of hard work for some time, perhaps all the season; drudging work that isn't exciting or spectacular but that you've got to go through with if you expect to face Springdale. I'd like every one of you who goes on the field presently to do it with your mind made up to do what you're told without question and to do it cheerfully. That's the only way you and I can work together to any sort of success."

Dick nodded to Lanny and swung himself toward the door, but paused there, for Lanny was talking.

"That's good straight talk, fellows," Lanny was saying earnestly, "and I second it. But Coach Lovering mustn't think he can frighten us by talking hard work to us, for he can't. We expect to work hard and we want to work hard. We want to get back at Springdale this year and wipe out what happened last, fellows, and we aren't going to mind anything that happens so long as we can face Springdale in November with an even chance to win!"

The applause greeting that sentiment was spontaneous and hearty.

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"There's just one other thing, fellows," Lanny continued. "You all know the fellow who has just spoken to you, and those of you who know him as well as I do—or half as well—know that he will do the very best he knows how for us. But it's new stuff to Dick and it's not going to be any cinch for him. So let's help him all we can, remembering that by helping him we're helping ourselves and the School. Let's put our confidence in him, fellows, let's do what he tells us cheerfully and let's make up our minds that, no matter what—what discouragements or failures may come, in the end we're going to be right there with the goods! Lovering isn't doing this for money, as most of you know, for the Committee has seen to that. He's doing it because—well, because some of us pestered the life out of him until he consented, and because he's patriotic enough to take over a mighty difficult and thankless job when he can't really afford the time it will take. Now, fellows, let's have a cheer for Coach Lovering, and make it good!"

And it was good! And Dick, who had waited at the door for Lanny to conclude, slipped out and, with the whole-hearted acclaim from some forty lusty throats following him, gazed thoughtfully

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across the fading green of the field and silently resolved to make good in this new and strange role he had assumed.

That evening, after supper, Dick, Lanny, George Cotner and Chester Cottrell met at Lanny's house. Cotner had prepared a list of candidates arranged alphabetically at Dick's request. When he received the list Dick asked but one question: "Are all those fellows eligible to play, George?"

"Yes, as far as I know. I have to take their words for it, of course."

"We won't do that. I'll hand this list to Mr. Murray to-morrow and ask him to check it up. Some of them may not have passed the examination and we don't want to waste time on any fellow who may be taken away from us later on."

Lanny looked doubtful. "We haven't paid much attention to physical examinations lately, Dick," he said. "I guess I could name half a dozen fellows who haven't been near Mr. Murray this Fall."

"The rule is still in force, isn't it?" asked Dick in surprise.

"Yes, I suppose so, but it's a sort of dead letter now."

"It shouldn't be, Lanny. We don't want fellows

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who are not sound and fit. We don't want accidents and we don't want fellows petering out in mid-season. So I guess we'll have all those who haven't taken their exams do it to-morrow. Suppose you write a notice to that effect, George, and post it on the bulletin board. And write a call for candidates, too, please. Say we want twenty more fellows, must have them right away and don't care whether they've played football before or not."

"You'll get a lot of dubs if you say that," volunteered Cottrell dubiously.

"I don't want dubs," smiled Dick, "but I do want to get hold of fellows who have strong bodies and good lungs and plenty of brains. I'd rather make a team out of eleven chaps with intelligence who never saw a football than out of that many football players without intelligence, Chester. Even if we find only one out of the twenty who makes good it'll be worth the trouble."

"Right-o," said George. "Shove me some of that pad over here, Lanny."

"Now," said Dick, "tell me what you know of Springdale this year, fellows. I know what she did to us last Fall and how she did it, but I want to know what they are planning for this year and

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what sort of material they have. Anybody know?"

Lanny and Cottrell each shook his head. George Cotner's uninterrupted scratching with his pen signified an equal ignorance.

"About all I know," said Lanny finally, "is that they've got six of last year's team back and a number of good subs."

"Have they got the same back-field?"

"Pretty near. They lost Morgan."

"Morgan was left half, wasn't he?"

"Right half."

"And the chap who out-punted us about ten yards every time. Well, have they got another punter in sight? Have they got anyone who is clever at field-goals?"

"Search me," responded Lanny. "We can find out, I suppose."

"We must, Lanny. We've got to know pretty near what their line of attack is to be in order to work up our defense. If they are going to form their team around a clever drop-kicker we want to know it. If they're going to depend on the rushing game entirely we want to know that. If they're going in strong for passing we want to know that."

"I suppose," said Cottrell, "the best thing to do

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is to send a scout to see them play next Saturday."

Dick agreed. "But," he added, "we won't learn much from such an early game. I think we'd better subscribe to the Springdale papers and follow what we see there. Until we can get a fair idea of what Springdale's line of attack is going to be we can't do much about our own defense. But there's plenty of time for that, fellows. I want to put in a good three weeks of the old-fashioned football. We don't want to lose the game by a wretched fumble or through lack of ordinary football sense. And that's about the way we lost last Fall."

"That's so, I guess," agreed Cottrell. "You all know I did all I could to lose that game!"

"You made mistakes, Chester," said Dick, "and so did most of the others. I'm not trying to place the blame anywhere except on the team as a whole. That's where it belongs. But I don't want to see the same mistakes repeated this year. And that's why I want the fellows to learn football from the ground up. And there are plenty of them who began at the second story," he added dryly.

Lanny laughed. "That's true, Dick. I felt myself last Fall that Farrell wasn't paying enough

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attention to essentials. And we all know that he paid so little heed to the subs that when we wanted them we didn't have second or third string players who could do anything at all. I'm not trying to put the loss of the game on Farrell, of course, but—well, he did make mistakes. I suppose we all do.”

“Of course we do,” responded Dick cheerfully. “Only let's try and make as few as possible, and by all means let's make fewer than the other fellow. Will you look after posting those notices, George, the first thing in the morning?”

“So will do,” answered the manager. “Want to see 'em?”

Dick read them over and approved. “Then that's all for this time, I guess,” he said, reaching for his crutches. “I'll be going on. Want a lift, Chester?”

“No, thanks, I'll stay a while longer. Good night, Dick. Here's hoping!”

Dick smiled in the doorway.

“Here's trying,” he corrected.

CHAPTER VII

CLEARFIELD MEETS DEFEAT

LOCUST Valley High School descended on Clearfield the following Saturday, as Chester Cottrell phrased it, "loaded for b'ar!" She came with some two dozen capable-looking red-stockinged youths, a head coach who had red hair—Dick said that was a dangerous sign!—and a manager who brought joy to the Clearfield supporters by sporting a green alpine hat of the fuzzy variety. Clearfield cheered delightedly when she first laid eyes on that hat, and cheered at intervals throughout the afternoon, whenever the wearer of the hat showed activity.

Locust Valley found Clearfield unprepared. The line-up that started the first period for the Purple amazed most of the fellows and displeased those who pretended to be football authorities. Why, in

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the name of all that was sensible, should Egbert Peyton be playing right tackle? Equally incongruous to them was the presence of George Tupper at right half, of Pete Robey at left guard and of Ambrose Smith at right end. "It's a wonder," some critics grumbled, "he's let Lanny White play!"

Defeat for Clearfield was a foregone conclusion after the first five minutes of play. Clearfield got her signals mixed, utterly failed to follow the ball closely, was fooled on the simplest plays and, on the whole, put up as wretched an exhibition of football as one can imagine. Locust Valley was well advanced for so early in the season, her warriors had a diversified attack that was hard to meet and her coach was a tactician of merit. At the end of the first period Locust Valley had scored a touchdown by a mixture of old-fashioned line-plunging and new-fashioned cross-passing and had kicked a goal. Clearfield had not succeeded in even threatening the opponent's citadel.

Dick imperturbably put Harry Bryan in at left end and Thad Brimmer at center and the game went on. Clearfield showed occasional flashes of real football, as when, half-way through the second period, Lanny, with Cottrell interfering, ran some

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thirty yards straight through the opponents and placed the pigskin on Locust Valley's twenty-three yards. But after that the Purple's offense was too weak to make much impression on the enemy and the ball was soon being punted back up the field. Clearfield showed almost no team-play. It was every man for himself, and some of the individual efforts were extremely crude. The team's supporters hoped against hope well into that second period and then began to grumble. Some of the things that were said about the team and about the coach were uncomplimentary in the extreme. The kindest thing that was muttered of Dick by these malcontents was that he didn't know enough football to coach a girl's school! The first half ended with the score 11 to 0, Locust Valley having failed to kick a goal from a difficult angle.

To make a long story short, the enemy departed later in the afternoon with the ball and a 26 to 3 victory. That three points Clearfield managed to secure in the last five minutes of the battle by the timely introduction of Morris Brent. Coach Lovering used practically three elevens that day, and, considering the sort of game put up by some of the players, it was a wonder that Locust Valley didn't

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double her score! Clearfield retired from the field in a mutinous mood. There was even talk of a mass meeting to protest against the further retention of Dick as coach. Clearfield, they said bitterly, had never been beaten as badly as that in the memory of any student, and only once before had she failed to win from Locust Valley. It was all very well to make the Springdale game the goal of the season's work, but there was no sense in being licked by every little whipper-snapper of an opponent meanwhile. Why hadn't Lovering used the team that had beaten Highland Hall last Saturday instead of experimenting with every kid who had the price of a pair of canvas trousers?

Dick had his defenders, of course, but they were in the minority. As for Dick himself, he showed no concern over the outcome of that contest. George Cotner, whose confidence in Dick had been somewhat shaken that afternoon, ventured to offer condolences after the game.

"Too bad, Dick," he said. "Still, we did score on 'em. I suppose, considering everything, we couldn't have expected to win."

"Probably not," replied Dick calmly. "Let me have your memorandum, please. I want to go over



“‘Too bad, Dick,’ he said. ‘Still, we did score on ‘em.’”

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it to-night. By the way, can you find a fellow to help with the dummy on Monday?"

"Yes, I'll get one of the kids. We'll have to buy some more balls in a day or two, Dick. We lost one to-day, you know."

"Yes, and we may lose more. You'd better order a half-dozen on Monday."

George confided that evening to Cottrell that Dick didn't seem much worried by the day's fiasco.

"Why should he?" asked Chester loyally, observing the manager with a disapproving scowl. "Who cares what Locust Valley does if we can get a team that will beat Springdale?"

"I know," George hastened to say, "but seems to me it's a bad idea to let any team walk over us the way Locust Valley did. It—it sort of destroys confidence. Besides, just between you and me, Chester, the fellows don't like it much. I've heard talk of a meeting to protest."

Chester shrugged his square shoulders and grinned. "Let 'em," he said shortly. "Much good it'll do 'em. Dick Lovering's coach and he's going to be coach. We all agreed to give him a free rein and he's going to have it. It seems to me the best thing you can do is to stand up for him, George."

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"I am!" declared the other, scandalized by the insinuation. "I do! I've been telling fellows all the afternoon that Dick knows what he's doing and that if he wants to lose every game but the Springdale game he has a perfect right to do it!"

"All right. Then don't talk as if you thought he didn't have any sense." And Chester turned away with a scowl that, because of a strip of dirty white plaster on his cheek-bone, made him look quite ferocious.

Dick's request for twenty more candidates resulted in the appearance of some eight or ten youths, mostly of tender years and all without football experience. Cotner and Lanny viewed the volunteers pessimistically, but Dick failed to exhibit any disappointment at the result of his summons. He added the new fellows to the rest and went diligently on. On Monday there was a full hour of dummy-tackling, and fellows who had prided themselves on their ability in that line had much of the conceit taken out of them. Dick's knowledge of tackling surprised even Lanny and Gordon and others who believed the most firmly in his ability to lead Clearfield to victory. For a fellow who had never handled a pigskin, he certainly had a whole lot of

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knowledge stowed away in that head of his! He fell foul of Tom Haley early in the proceedings and the fact that Tom was a very good friend of his made no difference in his speech.

"How long have you been playing, Tom?" asked Dick coldly as the last year's center picked himself up from the dirt.

"Three or four years," answered Tom in some surprise, pausing in the act of rubbing the soil from his face.

"Then you ought to be ashamed to tackle like that," said Dick severely. "Try it again, please. And remember that the idea is to *stop* the man and not tickle him under the knees!"

Tom flushed, choked down a retort that his companions in the line surmised was none too patient and poised himself again while the swaying dummy once more crossed the pit.

"Now get into it!" urged Dick. "Stop him! Put him back!"

Perhaps chagrin was responsible for what ensued. Tom made a hard dive and whipped his arms out for the canvas body, but in some way the dummy eluded him and Tom rolled over sprawling on his back, while the stuffed figure, with its faded C, went

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dancing crazily on its way. Tom picked himself up, angrily aware of the amused expressions on the faces of the others, and, brushing his hands absordedly, took up his position again at the end of the line. Dick said nothing. Another candidate hurled himself at the dummy, with a rattle and bang of chain and pulley, and then another and another. Dick awarded each one a word of criticism, approving or disparaging. "Better, Way." "All right, Jack." "Rotten, Bert. Get in front and not behind." "Brimmer, you act as if you were afraid of it! Try it again." Ultimately it was once more Tom Haley's turn, and Tom had a little disk of white on each cheek as he watched Manager Cotner pull the dummy back and lay hold of the other rope. An expectant silence fell. Dick nodded and the figure started across the pit on its iron trolley. Tom, hands clenched, ran forward a few steps and launched himself. His arms enwrapped the dummy's thighs, there was a mighty grunt from Tom and the sound of ripping canvas, and tackler and dummy reposed in the dirt while the chain and ring sped jangling around the block toward the further end. A burst of hilarity greeted the performance. Dick smiled.

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"That's the way to do it, Tom," he approved heartily as Tom tossed the dummy from his prostrate form and arose, "and I'd like to see every one of you tear it off the ring every time! Get a new strap made for that by to-morrow, George, please. That's all for to-day, fellows. On the trot now. Two laps around the field before you go in."

The mass meeting didn't materialize. No one had really expected it to. What had seemed a catastrophe on Saturday had become merely an unfortunate incident by Monday. No one, you may be sure, had mentioned the matter to Dick, but he was not in ignorance of the sentiment of the school in general. But if it bothered him he made no sign. He went on his way smiling. Even when on the next Wednesday it became known that Will Horsford had been forbidden further participation in football by reason of a weak heart discovered in the course of a physical examination by Mr. Murray, and the fellows learned that Dick had insisted on a revival of a regulation that had become virtually a dead letter and criticism was rampant, Dick appeared to be quite unaware of it. Horsford was a good player, a lineman who had performed creditably at guard and tackle for two seasons, and

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there was no contradicting the assertion so loudly made that the team had lost one of its best men. Dick's course in insisting on physical examinations for the candidates was labeled absurd.

"What's the good," fellows asked, "of reviving that rot? If Faculty is satisfied why do we need to complain? And look what the result is! One of the best players we had lost to us!"

Nor was the explanation of Dick's friends that it was good policy to take no chances with fellows physically weak and so liable to injury accepted as sufficient. "Lovering's too much of a granny for this job," was the answer. "He ought to be coaching the grammar school team!"

On Thursday Dick began the formation of a First Squad—Squad A he called it—and to it he gathered an even two dozen. The balance he formed into Squad B. There were some surprises in that partitioning. Page Kent, right guard in the Highland Hall game, was relegated to Squad B, as was Jack Toll, right end. Guy Felker, who had always played half or fullback, was tried out as end, and Fudge Shaw was made unintelligible for days by being placed on Squad A amongst the candidates for the position of guard. Harry Par-

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tridge, who had started the season as captain of the Scrub, found himself elevated to the upper squad, and it was Tom Nostrand who fell heir to his honor. That alone was sufficient to excite comment, for Nostrand had never shown any particular ability as a player. He had, however, a full set of brains, as Dick pointed out to Lanny when the latter showed surprise at the selection.

"Nostrand won't make a first-class player in a hundred years," said Dick with conviction, "but, unless I'm away off my track, he's just the fellow to run the Scrubs. He's smart, thinks like lightning, can handle fellows and knows the way things ought to be done even if he can't do them. I expect him to work out a mighty good team of what he's got to work on."

Dick's prediction proved correct, although the fact didn't appear just yet. On Saturday the eleven journeyed to Norrisville and played the Norrisville Academy team. The forty or fifty supporters who made the trip with the team scarcely looked for a victory for the Purple, for rumor credited the Academy with being unusually strong this Fall, while it wasn't apparent to the Clearfield rooters that Dick's aggregation was one whit better than a

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week before. But their expressions of resigned gloom were speedily turned to looks of surprised delight, for Clearfield set about things in a hearty, not-to-be-denied manner that amazed Norrisville as much as it did the Clearfield supporters.

The Purple started with Bryan, left end, Partridge, left tackle, Cable, left guard, Haley, center, A. Beaton, right guard, Scott, right tackle, Felker, right end, Cottrell, quarter, White, left half, Tupper, right half and N. Beaton, fullback. There was much more coherence apparent than there had been a week ago, although real team-play was yet to be discovered. Cottrell ran the eleven in excellent shape and chose his plays better than he ever had. The attack, while restricted to only a half-dozen plays, had power and the defense really deserved the name.

Nelson Beaton, at full, was the man of the day, for he showed a quite unsuspected ability to gain through the line and his plunges were hard to stop until he was well into the secondary defense. At end, Felker showed promise but was still too unaccustomed to the duties of the position to be entirely satisfactory. Scott was weak at right tackle. Partridge did well at left tackle and Bryan, on the

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wing at that end, was almost spectacular. Just to prove that they knew something besides hitting the line, Cottrell got three forward passes away for good gains in the first half. Thereafter the Purple stuck to old-style football, playing on the defensive for most of the time. For, with 17 points to their credit against the opponent's 6, why worry, as Chester Cottrell put it?

Norrisville earned her one touchdown, which came to her in the second period, by taking advantage of a fumble by Tupper of a punt which nearly went over his head. Norrisville fell on the rolling ball on Clearfield's twenty-two yards and, using a shift which completely fooled her opponent, smashed straight through Scott for a score. Of Clearfield's two touchdowns, Lanny made one and Nelson Beaton the other, and in each case a goal was secured. The remaining three points were secured by an easy drop-kick from the twenty-three yards which went neatly across the bar. That was Morris Brent's usual contribution and he was taken out again soon after.

Perhaps the most encouraging feature of that game was the showing of Partridge at left tackle. To immediately discover a player capable of step-

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ping into the shoes of the disbarred Horsford was a fine piece of luck and did much toward reconciling the fellows to the loss of the former tackle and exonerating Dick of the blame. It was generally conceded after the Norrisville High game that Coach Lovering had really done very well with the team in the scant ten days he had been at the helm. And doubtless he had, although it must be taken into consideration that Norrisville had not presented a very strong team.

Dick took eighteen players with him that afternoon and gave each of them a chance at some time during the game. Gordon Merrick, whom he had placed on Squad A, went in for the whole fourth period. Gordon was Dick's closest friend and it may be that he had allowed his friendship to somewhat sway his judgment, for Dick was only human. In any case, the result had been disappointing, and Dick intimated as much that evening when the two boys were walking downtown to the Auditorium to see the moving pictures.

"I think," said Dick, "you can play a better game than you did to-day, Gordie. What was the trouble?"

"I don't know," answered Gordon ruefully. "I

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guess I was pretty poor, though. I don't believe there's much use wasting time on me, Dick. I'd never play half as well as George Tupper."

"I'd like to have you on the team," said Dick thoughtfully.

"I'd like to make it, too, but—well, I guess I'm no born football player, Dickums."

"There isn't such a thing as a born football player, Gordie. You see what you can do this week, will you? You know I want to give you every chance, but I can't afford to play any favorites. You understand, don't you?"

"Of course! I wouldn't want you to, Dickums. I'll do my level best and if I don't make a heap better showing you drop me. Don't think I'm going to be peevish about it. I know perfectly well I haven't any business on the First. So do you."

Dick laughed. "Well, we'll see. To be frank, Gordie, you haven't shown up as well as Tupper or Hansard, and I can't very well keep more than two substitute halves. In fact, to stay with Squad A you'll have to beat out either Hansard or McCoy. Unless—" Dick hesitated and it was not until they had crossed Main Street that he continued. Then, "I wonder how you'd shape up at end, Gordie."

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"Try me," said Gordon. "I've never played end. But, say, you've got all kinds of good ends, Dick! Bryan was a wonder to-day, and then there's Feller and Toll and Grover. Still, I'd like to try. I'm a pretty rotten halfback, that's certain!"

"All right. I'll try you to-morrow. We must be late. Look at the mob at the door!"

"There's Fudge and Harry. I'll ask them to get our tickets." And Gordon, whose turn it was to treat, slipped his two dimes into Fudge's hand just as that youth reached the window where sat the resplendent ticket seller.

"Hello, Gordon! Two? Sure! Four of your best tickets, please!" The latter remark was addressed to the ticket seller and elicited only a haughty stare and four little blue tickets torn from a seemingly endless strip. But Fudge chuckled at his own joke, quite unaffected by the man's hauteur, and the four boys crowded through the door and sought seats together in the darkened house.

The Auditorium prided itself on being very high-class and Fudge was soon grumbling about the sort of photo-plays being presented. "Gee," he confided to Dick, "these pictures make me tired! They never have anything exciting any more. Say, know

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what I'm going to do? Well, I'm going to make that story I'm writing into a 'movie' play. How's that?"

"Great!" said Dick. "How are you getting on with it?"

"Pretty well," answered the other with a sudden lapse of enthusiasm. "The trouble is I don't seem able to work it out. You see, the fellow who murdered the old codger, Middleton, had to get into that room somehow, didn't he?"

"I suppose he did," agreed Dick.

"Well, but how could he? There were bars at the window and the door was locked inside."

"I guess he committed suicide, Fudge."

"Couldn't have," responded Fudge decidedly. "The wound was on the back of his head."

"You could change that, couldn't you?"

"Y-yes, but that wouldn't do. He had to be murdered so that Young Sleuth could unravel the mystery, don't you see? I thought maybe I'd have it that the murderer was hidden somewhere in the room and escaped afterwards, but Young Sleuth looked everywhere. There's six pages about his examination of the room and his finding a clew."

"What sort of a clew did he find?" asked Dick,

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trying to seem interested in Fudge's conversation and at the same time follow the story being thrown on the screen.

"Finger-prints," confided Fudge, "and a piece of torn paper with three words on it."

"Fine! What were the words?"

"I don't know yet. I haven't got to that. Young Sleuth found the paper and didn't let on he had it. Detective stories are awfully hard to write. But it would make a dandy 'movie'!"

By that time the patience of those sitting in the neighborhood was exhausted and Fudge was requested to stop talking. He subsided with a grin, but a close observer would have seen that he was not paying much heed to the polite adventures of the beautiful heroine of the photo-play. Instead of looking toward the stage he fixed his gaze on the bald head of the man in front of him and surreptitiously munched chestnuts. When, finally, the play ended with a moonlight scene in which virtue was brilliantly triumphant, Fudge grunted his disapproval and once more turned to Dick.

"I've got it!" he whispered hoarsely.

"Got what?" asked Dick.

"The solution! Old Middleton was attacked out-

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side the room and went in there and locked the door himself! How's that?"

"That might do," conceded Dick, "but how about the clews?"

Fudge's face fell. "That's so. I guess I could change that about the clews, though. What's this fellow going to do? Play a banjo? Gee, this is a bum show!"

CHAPTER VIII

THE COMMITTEE IN SESSION

SIXTY-TWO dollars and sixty-five cents," announced Louise Brent disconsolately. "I don't believe we'll ever get enough!"

"I wonder who gave the five cents," murmured Lanny.

The Twenty-fifth of October Fund Committee was assembled on the side porch at Brentwood, facing a problem.

"We need about twenty-eight dollars more, don't we?" asked Gordon. Louise nodded.

"Unless we left off the filing-cabinet," she said.

"How much less would that make it?"

"We figured the cabinet at eighteen dollars. Maybe it would be less, though."

"Eighteen," reminded Morris, "was before we

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took off thirty per cent. So it would only make it about twelve dollars."

"Yes, and I so hoped we could get the cabinet too," said Louise.

"Well, we've tackled about everyone in school," said Gordon. "I can give another dollar, I guess, but that doesn't help much."

"The trouble is," said Morris, "that most of the fellows are down on Mr. Grayson about the coaching business."

"Don't see why they should be," said Lanny, "after Saturday's game. Seems to me that ought to prove that we can win without paying money for a professional coach."

"Of course," agreed Morris hurriedly, darting an anxious glance at Dick, fearing he had said something to hurt him. "Maybe they think differently about it now. How would it do to ask fellows again?"

Gordon groaned. "I absolutely refuse," he asserted. "If we have got to do that someone will have to take my list."

"How many are there who haven't been asked?" inquired May Burnham.

"Only about twenty," replied Louise, "and most of them are the younger boys."

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"And they don't give much, anyway," said Gordon. "We may be able to make up another five dollars, but I guess that's about all. There's only two weeks more, about."

"Well, supposing we got seventy dollars altogether," asked Dick. "Is there anything we could do without, so as to bring the whole bill to seventy?"

Louise referred to her list. "The easy-chair would be about fourteen," she replied. "But we simply couldn't do without that, Dick."

"No, the easy-chair seems rather necessary. By the way, how much of the sixty-two is actually paid?"

"Thirty-seven dollars and twenty-five cents. I don't suppose we'll get it all, either, by the time we need it."

"I'll borrow the difference from father," said Morris. "He will let us have it, I guess. I dare say I could afford to contribute another dollar or two."

"There's no reason why you should," declared Nell Sawin. "I think it's a shame that we can't make up a small amount like that. The girls have given almost half again as much as the boys. They ought to be ashamed of themselves!" This was quite severe for Nell, who was normally incapable

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of censure, and Lanny was moved to a defense of his sex.

"We have more things to spend our money on than you girls," he said. "Besides, there are more girls than boys in school, Nell."

"Only about ten," said Louise severely, tapping her teeth with the tip of her brother's fountain pen. "We've just got to get some more money."

"Let's have a fair," suggested May, and Grace Lovering, who had not contributed to the discussion, clapped her hands.

"Let's!" she said. "We could easily make twenty dollars, Louise!"

"Fairs are no earthly use," was the reply. "Not when you really want to make anything. It always costs nearly as much as you take in to get ready. We'd have to make things or get folks to give us things to sell, and there isn't time. We might—might have an entertainment, though."

"There isn't time for that, either," said Morris. "Besides, no one would come."

At that moment Lanny, who had been thoughtfully silent for a minute, said: "I think I've got it, folks, but you'll have to give me a day or two to mull it over. No questions, please!"

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"Oh, Lanny, have you really?" demanded Nell eagerly. "What is it? A show?"

"No questions, I said," laughed Lanny. "I'll tell you on—let me see; this is Monday—on Wednesday evening. We'll have another meeting then, if you like. Meanwhile you folks get busy with those who haven't been asked yet and see what can be done. I'd like to know how much we have to make before I—spring my scheme on you."

"I'm so glad someone's thought of something," declared Louise, with a sigh of relief. "We'll meet again Wednesday, then. Did—did anyone say he wanted to subscribe some more?" And Louise held her list out invitingly. Lanny took it and added his name for another dollar. Dick shook his head with a smile.

"I'd like to, but I'm afraid I can't, Louise."

"Never mind. Gordon, you said you would, didn't you?"

"Yes, I believe I did," sighed Gordon, accepting the paper and taking the pen from Lanny. "And just to prove that a Merrick is as good as his word and a little better I'll put my name down here for—for a dollar and—let me see; if one ice-cream soda costs ten cents, two ice-cream sodas

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would cost twenty cents. Wouldn't they, Lanny?"

"What on earth are you talking about?" asked Louise.

"There; one dollar and twenty cents," said Gordon, writing. "I'll take cash for those sodas, Lanny."

"What sodas? Somebody feel his head, please!"

"Don't you worry about my head, old chap. All you have to do is fork over twenty cents."

"What's it for? Do I owe you twenty cents?"

"You owe me two sodas, Lanny, or, to be exact, you owe me one soda and yourself one soda. Being a philanthropist I donate the price of the sodas to this worthy cause."

"Do you mean that I bet the sodas with you?"

"Ex-act-ly! You bet me we wouldn't have a football coach within a week and I bet you we would. And we did. Twenty cents, please!"

"Thunder! So I did!" laughed Lanny, fumbling in his pocket. "But, hold on! Are you sure we got him within the week?"

"Positive," declared Gordon with conviction. "We made the wager the night of the last meeting of this committee, which was a Tuesday. We secured our present capable coach at about nine-

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forty-five the following Monday evening. Anything more to say?"

"No, here's your old twenty cents. Only it's a quarter. Got a nickel?"

"I may have," replied Gordon untroubledly, "but I don't intend to look. I'll just change that twenty cents to twenty-five and so save trouble. There we are! And here's the cash, Louise. Put your little cross opposite my name, please."

After that Morris insisted on giving another dollar and Nell fifty cents. "I haven't the slightest idea where I'll get it," declared the latter tragically. "I'll just have to do something and make some money. Perhaps I'll sell matches on the street corner! Or—or have a lemonade stand in the front yard!"

"If you do please see that the lemonade is hot," said Lanny. "Cold lemonade in this weather wouldn't go very fast."

"Then," said Louise, rising, "I suppose you don't want any, Lanny. Never mind, I dare say the rest of us can drink it."

"Oh, well," replied Lanny carelessly, "if you have it all made— Rather than seem unappreciative, you know——"

CHAPTER IX

LANNY EXPLAINS

DICK was a very busy person those days. He had not deceived himself into thinking that coaching the High School Football Team would entail but little time and effort. His mistake had been in underestimating the amount of labor and time involved. Actual outdoor work took up a good two hours and a half every day save Sunday. Then at least five evenings a week Lanny and George Cotner, and often one or other of the players besides, met at his house and discussed progress, made plans, corrected mistakes, worked out formations and plays and conducted a sort of general football conference. This lasted anywhere from one to two hours, and after the others had gone Dick had to settle down at his books. Fortunately the senior year at high school was, in comparison with the years gone be-

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fore, fairly easy, and Dick usually managed to do a good part of his preparation during the day, between classes. If he had not he would have been forced to yield either his position as football coach or his attendance at the High School!

But even the period in the afternoon and the one or two hours in the evening did not comprise all the time given to football, for Dick found that it was impossible to clear his mind of gridiron affairs at other moments. They obtruded when he tried to study, even when he was at his meals and often kept him awake at night when he should have been asleep. He was forever pulling out the little black note-book he carried in a vest pocket and jotting down a memorandum in it, and he got so he even went off into thought-trances when folks were talking to him! As when one evening at supper his sister Grace consulted him with regard to some problem connected with the new heating system which he was having installed in the cottage. Dick listened with apparent attention, his eyes on his plate, until Grace had finished. Then he surprised that young lady by looking up and remarking thoughtfully: "That end-around play won't go unless we can keep the ball out of sight until the runner reaches the line."

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Grace declared that he was losing his mind.

One of Dick's duties was to follow the progress of the Springdale High School Team as reflected in the columns of the *Springdale Morning Recorder*. The accounts of the team's practice sessions were not very voluminous, but they appeared to be reported by a high school boy and were doubtless, as far as they went, authentic. Dick usually clipped the articles from the paper and they were discussed at the meetings. It was on the Tuesday evening following the Norrisville game that Lanny again broached the subject of sending someone to see Springdale play. "We can't tell much by this newspaper stuff," he said. "We've found out who they'll probably use against us, but we don't know what sort of a game they're planning. I think we ought to see them play Benton next Saturday and get a line on them. Could you go over, Dick?"

"Why don't you go?" asked Dick.

"Why, I suppose I could," replied Lanny doubtfully. "Only—well, we play Logan, and Logan has a pretty fair team, I guess."

"What of it? McCoy will do well enough. I'd go along, but I guess one of us had better stay here. You take Chester with you, Lanny. He's good at

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sizing things up. Besides, that would give you a chance to watch the backfield and let him watch the linemen. Kirke can play quarter for us Saturday."

"But I'd hate to have Logan beat us," Lanny objected. "Suppose you and Chester go, Dick."

Dick smiled and George Cotner chuckled audibly. Lanny flushed.

"Oh, I don't think that we are going to lose the game just because I'm not here," he said. "Only—oh, I don't know! I'll do just as you say, Dick."

"Then you'll go; you and Chester," replied Dick. "Later on I'll see them in action myself, but I'd rather wait until about a week before we play them. Let me see; who do they meet the Saturday before they play us?" Dick turned the pages of a scrapbook and found the Springdale schedule. "Weston Academy, eh? Where's that?"

"Up-state," replied George. "A small school. Springdale's evidently looking for an easy game that day."

"Then she won't show much," mused Dick. "Still, I could get away that afternoon very nicely, for we play the grads."

"I don't believe they'll ever get together to play us," said George. "Fosdick told me Saturday that

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he was having a hard time getting the fellows to promise. If they don't we'll be in a hole. I told Means last Winter that he couldn't depend on the grads for a game."

"Well, we won't cross that bridge until we come to it," said Dick. "Maybe if the grads don't turn up we can find another team to play us. If we can't we can have a pretty good afternoon of practice, and I dare say that will be quite as much good to us."

"Then you think Chester and I had better go to Springdale Saturday?" asked Lanny not over-enthusiastically. Dick nodded.

"Yes, I do, Lanny. See what they look like and how their backfield shapes up. And above all watch their formations. If they show anything new don't miss it. Better jot it down at the time. And find out if you can whether they've got a man who can kick goals from the field. A good deal will depend on that. Bring back everything you can, Lanny. Every little bit helps."

"All right. You won't take any chances with that Logan game, though, will you, Dick?" he pleaded. "You know they tied us last year."

"Bother your old Logan game!" laughed Dick. "If you say much more about it I'll forfeit it to them!

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Seriously, though, Lanny, that game doesn't mean much to us, and if I can scrape through without being absolutely beaten I'll be satisfied. Just keep your eyes on the eighteenth of November, Lanny, and forget about what goes on before."

"I suppose so," Lanny agreed, "only—when you're captain you sort of like to do the best you can; make a good showing for the season, you know."

"A good showing isn't possible unless we beat Springdale," replied Dick emphatically, "and that's what we're working for. I don't much care if we lose every game from now till then, if we win that one. Now let's get at those plays. This No. 3 won't work out, I guess. We're taking too many men from the right of the line and we're giving the play away from the start. There's one thing we've got to keep in mind, fellows, and that is that the simpler our plays are the better they'll work. If we decide on that formation we've talked of our plays have got to be simple. I don't mind trying this No. 6 out in practice if you like, but I don't cheer for it much."

"Just the same, if it did fool them," suggested George, "it would fool them badly and we'd make yards on it."

LANNY EXPLAINS

"But I don't think it would fool them," said Dick. "Not more than once, anyhow. And there's no use learning a play that can be used no more than once in a game. Frankly, fellows, I don't set much score on fancy formations and funny shifts and trick plays. They don't pan out well. Of course, if your opponent is weak you can make anything go, but we're planning for Springdale, and Springdale isn't weak. She knows a lot of football. Why, that No. 6 would be smeared to the hilt the second time we tried it, if not the first. With all due regard to you, Lanny, I'm going to forget that play."

And Dick rolled the sheet of paper up and tossed it into the waste-basket.

"Alas, poor child of my brain!" murmured George.

"Was that yours?" asked Dick. "I thought Lanny did that."

"No, mine was that quarterback-run play," said Lanny.

"Oh! Well, I'm sorry, George. If you want me to I'll try it out."

"No, don't bother. I dare say you're quite right about it. It is a bit involved."

"All right. Try again, George. Only keep them

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simple. Plays that use only two men are a heap better than those requiring half a dozen to mess around and get in each other's way. Now, here's this No. 8. I like that, Lanny. Was that yours?"

Lanny shook his head regretfully. "No, that's one that Corwin sprang on us last Fall. I changed it a bit, that's all. They pulled it off from a forward-pass formation, but that seemed to me to limit it a good deal. I thought it would be a good play to work from regular formation."

"I think it would. And if we can get that formation of ours to working right it would be a good play to add to that 4 and 5 sequence. We'll lay it aside for now, though. What we want for the next fortnight is about three more plays outside of tackle. Now let's get busy."

The Twenty-fifth of October Fund Committee met as arranged on Wednesday night, all members present save Grace Lovering, whose regrets were formally expressed by Dick.

"She isn't sick, is she?" asked Louise concernedly.

"Not at all," replied Dick gravely. "She is in most robust health. To relieve your kind anxiety, Louise, I'll state that to-night is bread-making night at our house."

LANNY EXPLAINS

"Oh!" laughed Louise. "That's it! Can Grace really make bread, Dick?"

"None better. When last seen she was up to her elbows in dough."

"I think that's awfully clever of her," said Nell Sawin. "I wish I could do it. Don't you, May?"

May Burnham, who had received Dick's announcement with surprise, agreed somewhat doubtfully. May had always considered household duties rather below the dignity of one who was so closely related to the wealthy and influential Brents, but, observing that Louise seemed to think Grace Lovering's accomplishment something to be proud of instead of ashamed of, she added, with more enthusiasm: "I think it must be very nice to be able to do things like that"; and secretly wondered whether her own views were mistaken. Certainly, she reflected, none of the others seemed at all shocked by Dick's confession.

Presently they got down to business and Louise, as treasurer, announced the fund now totaled sixty-eight dollars and eighty cents. "And," she added, "I think that's all we can get from the students. We've seen all the girls except one, who is ill, and Dick and Gordon have seen most of the boys."

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"All but three," replied Dick, "and they won't subscribe more than a quarter apiece, I guess."

"All right," said Lanny. "That leaves us about twenty-one dollars behind then. To-day's the eleventh, isn't it? And Mr. Grayson's birthday is the twenty-fifth, and that's just two weeks from to-day. When are you planning to buy the things?"

"I suppose we ought to do it a week ahead," said Morris. "It may take three or four days for them to get here by freight."

"Maybe longer," said Dick. "I wouldn't leave it much after the fifteenth."

"The fifteenth is Sunday," Morris reminded. "We might go to New York the next day, though."

"Who's going?" asked Gordon.

"Louise and May and I, unless some of you fellows want to go along."

"I guess none of us could get away," responded Dick. "You'll have to cut recitations, won't you, though?"

"Only one. We'll take the two-twelve train and that'll give us nearly three hours before the stores close. We can get back by eight. If we can get everything at Marsden's it won't take more than an

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hour or so. Father agreed last night to advance what money we need and we're to pay him back as fast as we collect from the students."

"We have almost fifty dollars paid in now," said Louise. "So we won't have to borrow more than forty from father."

"How about the expenses of your trip?" Lanny asked.

"We'll each pay our own," replied Louise. "It's only fair, because it's going to be rather fun. I wish we might all go."

"It will be all right if I cut practice that day, won't it?" asked Morris.

Dick nodded. "For that matter," he said, "Lanny and Gordon may go as far as practice is concerned. There won't be much hard work on Monday, anyway."

"Couldn't you go, Dick?" Louise asked.

"I'm afraid not. I'd have to cut two classes. Besides, I'm not much good at getting around in the crowds."

"I don't think I'll go, either," said Lanny.

"Same here," said Gordon. "You three will be enough. The more there are the harder it will be to agree on things."

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"Now please tell us about your plan, Lanny," said Nell eagerly.

"I don't know whether my plan is good for as much as twenty-one dollars," responded Lanny dubiously. "I think we may be able to get, say, fifteen, though. The reason I wouldn't say what it was the other night was that I had to consult others about it first; our Head Coach, for one."

"Cut out the prologue, Lanny," advised Gordon. "What's the scheme?"

"Well, they've got a sort of football team across the river called the North Side Athletics. The fellows are mill operatives and that chap Danny Shores, who played ball with us last Summer the time Jack Tappen was suspended, is captain. I met him a week or so ago at the post office and he told me about it. Said they'd like to play us some time. I told him I was sorry, but that our dates were all filled. But it occurred to me the other night that the fellows over there would pay ten or fifteen cents willingly to see their team play the High School, and there are a lot of them, you know. So I thought it would be a good scheme to arrange a game with them a week from Saturday. We go away that day to play Corwin, you know. Saturday's the only day they have

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to play. I saw Danny Shores yesterday and he's tickled to death about it. I had to tell him why we wanted to charge admission, but he promised not to say anything about it. They're so crazy to play that they don't want any part of the gate receipts, and Danny says we can get three or four hundred people. What do you think of it?"

Morris and Gordon looked puzzled, and the latter asked: "But how the dickens can we play Danny's team here if we're going away to play Corwin the same afternoon?"

"Oh, I meant to explain that we'd play the Scrubs against them; call them the High School Second Team, you know."

"I think it will be perfectly dandy!" exclaimed Louise.

"I shall go and see it," declared Nell firmly.

"Don't see," said Morris, "why you can't get a pretty good crowd to it. Not many of the fellows will go with the team to Corwin, I guess, and they'll be glad of a chance to see a game. How much are you going to charge, Lanny?"

"Dick and I thought ten cents apiece would be enough. If we got two hundred we'd make twenty dollars. But I don't believe we'd get more than a

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hundred and fifty. Still, that would mean fifteen dollars, and maybe we'll find a way of making up the other five."

"Pshaw," said Gordon, "there'll be easily two hundred there! And I think they'll pay fifteen cents as quick as ten."

"They might," said Dick, "but it's best not to take chances. Two hundred at ten cents will be better than a hundred at fifteen, Gordie."

"Bet you the North Siders will lick us," chuckled Gordon. "The Scrubs haven't found themselves yet."

"They will have by a week from Saturday," replied Lanny. "We're beginning scrimmaging tomorrow with them."

"I shall begin to save up my money," said Nell gravely. "I've just got to see it! Will anyone contribute a penny, please?"

All the boys donated, and Nell, jingling four pennies in her hands, pretended to be overcome with delight.

"There's a fellow named Tanner," said Lanny, "who has a printing press and does pretty good work with it. I'll see him and ask him to do some notices for us that we can put around in the store

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windows. I guess he will be willing to do them for nothing under the circumstances."

"I know him," said Gordon. "He's a particular crony of Fudge's. Take Fudge along with you."

"Then I don't see but that we're all right," said Louise. "And we needn't meet again until after we've been to New York. I do hope you will like what we pick out."

"We're sure to," replied Dick. "The main thing, though, is for Mr. Grayson to like them!"

"That reminds me," announced Morris, "that there will be a charge for carting the stuff from the freight-house to the school. I dare say Stewart will do it for a dollar and a half."

"You don't want to forget," reminded Nell, "that you may get the things cheaper than we estimated them. I dare say we'll have quite all the money we need. Wouldn't it be splendid if we did and I hadn't to pay my three dollars and a half after all?"

The others howled at that and Dick demanded his penny back. Gordon asked where the furniture was to be kept until they could smuggle it into the office, and Morris explained that they were going to have it taken to the school late in the afternoon, after Mr. Grayson had gone, and stored in a room in the base-

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ment. He had arranged with the janitor for that. "And then, the night before, Louise is going to get the key to Mr. Grayson's room and we're going to move the old furniture out into the hall and put the new things in."

"I shall be very busy at home that evening," murmured Gordon.

Louise regarded him indignantly. "Indeed you'll not, Gordon Merrick! Every one has got to help. Some of the things will be frightfully heavy."

"The janitor is going to help us," said Morris.

"As near as I can make out," remarked Dick, with a smile, "almost every one in town has been taken into the secret except Mr. Grayson. If he doesn't know of it already it's a miracle!"

"We had to tell the janitor," said Morris. "And Miss Turner. She's going to borrow his key for us."

"Oh, I'm not objecting," replied Dick. "But you'll have to acknowledge that the chances of keeping it from Mr. Grayson until the twenty-fifth are mighty slim."

"Anyway, I'm pretty sure he hasn't heard anything yet," said Louise. "And—and I don't believe he will. It would be too frightfully mean if anyone told him!"

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"Isn't it— isn't it getting rather late?" asked Lanny blandly.

"He's hinting for refreshments," said Louise scornfully. "I believe he only comes to the meetings for that. Anyway, he won't like the lemonade because it isn't hot."

"The weather has moderated so much since I made that unlucky remark that cold lemonade is quite satisfactory," answered Lanny. "And I *do* hope you have some more of that cake with the underdone frosting. It lasted me all the way home Monday night, Louise. I even found some on my shoes in the morning!"

"You're horribly insulting," his hostess laughed. "I made that cake myself, Lanny, and you ought to have raved about it!"

"I did—when I found it on my shoes," drawled Lanny.

CHAPTER X

FOOTBALL PROBLEMS

THE next day Dick appointed three assistant coaches. Bert Cable was to coach the line-men, Lanny the backs and Morris the kickers. Dick took the ends under his immediate charge. There were now five candidates for the end positions: Harry Bryan, Guy Felker, Jack Toll, Jim Grover and Gordon Merrick. Dick had very distinct ideas on the subject of end play and was fortunately able to convey them understandingly to the candidates. Gordon did not at once take kindly to the new position nor show any great aptitude for the duties involved. Except that he was quick and fast on his feet, was physically well built for an end and had a lot of sound sense, he was doubtless no more promising than half a dozen others whom Dick might have selected for the training. But Dick's theory

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that it was easier to make an intelligent fellow into a football player than to make a football player intelligent continued to guide his plans, and already he was succeeding in vindicating that theory.

Among the boys who had responded to the later call for candidates was a fifteen-year-old sophomore named Perry Hull. Perry had never tried for the team before and knew about as little football as it was possible to know and live in a community where it was played every Fall. But he was a bright-looking, quick-acting chap, with steady dark eyes and a firm mouth and chin, and he wasn't afraid of either hard knocks or hard work. When he reported he expressed complete indifference as to where he played, therein being much unlike the general run of candidates, most of whom demanded to be made into backs or ends. They told a story on Fudge Shaw which may not have been quite truthful, but in any case illustrates the point. Fudge, so the story went, reported for football in his sophomore year and, on being asked by Coach Farrell what position he was after, replied, "Oh, captain or quarterback, I guess!"

Dick liked Perry Hull's looks at once and watched him carefully for a week. His lack of size was

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against him as a lineman and, in fact, left few positions open to him. He might have developed into a satisfactory substitute end had not Dick been quietly looking for a quarterback with more powers of initiative than Orson Kirke showed. Kirke was a good handler of the ball, was rather clever at gaining in a broken field and could follow directions implicitly. But, left to himself, he never knew what to do and was liable to make the most stupid blunders in the matter of choosing plays. He had been third-string quarter the year before and had been used only when both Putnam, the regular quarter, and Cottrell, the first substitute, were unable to play. Dick didn't fancy Kirke as the sole proxy in the Springdale game and seized on Perry Hull eagerly as soon as he had sized up that youth. Hull was placed in the hands of Chester Cottrell for development and inside of a few days had proved Dick's acumen. Already, on the eve of the Logan contest, Hull was the logical candidate for first substitute quarterback, and Orson Kirke, who had theretofore looked on himself as certain encumbent of that position, was ruefully doing his best to outpace the usurper. Just now Kirke might be said to be still a full lap behind.

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Dick's ability to connect player and position was in a way remarkable. His sleight-of-hand trick in making Guy Felker, who had been playing fullback for two years, into a competent end was still marveled at, and his elevation of Partridge from the Scrub to the First Squad had been equally successful. And now the school was watching with almost breathless interest his experiment of molding a finished quarterback from the raw material. In fact, the school found a good deal to wonder at that Fall with regard to Dick. The Norrisville game had proved pretty conclusively, fellows considered, that they had made no mistake in their choice of a coach. Those who had openly scoffed were now either silent or frankly admiring, while those who had hailed Dick's advent from the first were now noisily triumphant. The question one heard on every hand was "How does Lovering know so much football when he has never played it and never had anything to do with it?"

Dick could have told them had he chosen to. All his life he had been forced to sit by and watch other boys do things; play baseball and football and tennis, run races, leap hurdles, skate and enjoy all the other sports from which he was debarred by reason of a

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weak spine. But Dick had not been content to merely look on and envy. He had studied while he watched, often, for his own amusement, imagining himself in the place of some more fortunate youth and telling himself just what he would do in such a case. To that end Dick read up on all the sports until, theoretically at least, he knew more about them by half than most of the fellows who participated. No one followed the baseball and football and track teams more closely than Dick. He seldom missed a contest. And, while others were content to observe results, Dick had to know the reasons for them. Many were the football problems he had worked out at home with a checkerboard and checkers, or with matches on a table-top, and many the imaginary games he had captained. Dick, in short, was a self-taught athlete, a book-learning one. But that book-learning and self-instruction may produce results had already been proved in the Summer, when he had piloted the baseball nine to many victories, and was now in a fair way to being proved again.

Dick didn't know it all, however. No fellow who has never actually played as well as studied can possess an all-around knowledge of the game. Dick was ignorant, for instance, of certain niceties of line-

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play, tricks that are second nature to a seasoned guard or tackle or center, but, realizing his ignorance, he didn't pretend knowledge. Quite frankly he asked information, solicited advice, even from the boys he was coaching. When he made a mistake he acknowledged the fact. One day when he was watching Squad A practice against Squad B, and Chester Cottrell had sent a split-tandem play at the opposing line for a loss of several yards, Dick found fault.

"You were wrong, Tupper," he said. "You should have put out your man and let Captain White clear up the hole. Try that again, Cottrell."

Cottrell, on the impulse, started to answer sharply. "No, he shouldn't, Coach! That play—" Then he stopped as quickly, clapped his hands and cried, "A Formation! Signals!" The others, returning to their places, were silent, Lanny casting a doubtful look at Dick as he fell in behind George Tupper again. Dick, however, had read the signs.

"One moment," he said. "Am I wrong, Captain White?"

"I think you are," replied Lanny frankly. "That play sends fullback against tackle, with the ball. Tupper's play is to engage the center and fake an

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attack on that position. If he goes in too hard and puts his man out too quick he doesn't give Beaton time to get through tackle. Same way with me, Coach. I'm supposed to draw guard in away from the play. If I smash in too hard and fast——"

"You're right," agreed Dick. "That was my mistake. We'll try that again later when they're not looking for it and see why it doesn't go. All right, Cottrell!"

One or two of the linemen started to grin, but almost instantly changed their minds. A coach who could make a mistake and own up to it as frankly as that wasn't a subject for ridicule! Farrell wouldn't have done it, they reflected. When Farrell made an error, and he sometimes did, for all his experience, he bullied them into a sort of half-belief that he had been right!

On Thursday Squad B became officially the Scrub Team and lined up against the First, or Varsity, as the fellows liked to call it, for the first real scrimmage. Tom Nostrand was captain and the roster consisted of Jones, left end, Mander, left tackle, Gage, left guard, Shaw, center, Nostrand, right guard, Peyton, right tackle, Smith, right end, Farrar, quarterback, Burns, left halfback, Sawin, right

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halfback, and Brimmer, fullback. Six other youths were retained as substitutes and the balance of the candidates, eight in number, were dropped. Fudge Shaw had not shown enough promise to warrant his retention on the Varsity and had been released to Nostrand and tried as center, in which position he was doing very well. For his part, Fudge was quite satisfied, for his ambition had never really gone beyond a place on the Scrub Team. It is doubtful, though, if Gage and Brimmer, both of whom had played with the First Team prior to Dick's advent, were as well pleased! However, it was well understood that changes were still likely to occur and that any fellow who proved his right to a place on the Varsity would get it, a knowledge which served to cause the Scrub Team players to do their best.

Tom Nostrand's warriors showed up remarkably well that afternoon and gave the Varsity a first-class argument. The best the latter could do was make a touchdown in each half of twenty minutes and hold the enemy scoreless. The Scrubs trotted from the field not a little proud of themselves and with Dick's commendation, "Good work, Scrub!" ringing in their ears. Tom Nostrand had already announced to them that they were to play the North Side

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team on the twenty-first, and they were more than pleased.

On Friday the Varsity, contrary to custom, was put through as hard if not harder practice than usual, and a full hour was spent in going over the few plays to be used against Logan the next day. Also, there was an extremely strenuous session with the dummy, and, after scrimmage was over, the backs and centers were kept until it was too dark to see, the centers passing to punters and the other backs running down under kicks. Morris Brent practiced goals from the field and managed to score about six out of ten, which, as some of the angles were extreme, was a creditable performance.

Morris was something of a problem to Dick and Lanny. In spite of the doctor's permission, Dick had a feeling that Morris, if allowed to play as much as he wanted to, was likely to peg out before the big game. Lanny, too, shared this belief, and, while neither of them could have given satisfactory reasons for it, they were agreed that the wise course was to nurse Morris along, giving him only enough work to keep him in condition, and bank all on his ability to reach the Springdale contest in top-form. Meanwhile Lanny himself was doing most of the punting,

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Chester Cottrell supplying short kicks from regular formation. So far Morris Brent had been brought into the game whenever a goal from field was necessary, but Dick was anxious to find another player who could also be relied on to add an occasional three points in that manner. So far, though, no one had shown much promise. Tupper and Nelson Beaton were doing their best under Morris's tuition, but they didn't seem to get on very fast. Dick heartily wished that he knew more about drop-kicking himself, or, better still, that there was somebody he could call on to come out and coach in that department of the game.

And in the meantime came the game with Logan, which, since it must be played without Lanny and Cottrell, presented another problem!

CHAPTER XI

"SPY!"

SPRINGDALE lies nestled amongst the hills six miles inland from Clearfield, and one may make the journey speedily enough by either steam railroad or trolley line. Lanny and Chester chose the latter route, and after an early dinner on Saturday, climbed into a front seat of one of the big, lumbering cars and settled themselves for the forty-minute trip. Chester—he was a sturdily-built chap of seventeen with a pleasant countenance and a singularly attractive voice—was supplementing his hasty meal with peanuts. Lanny declined the delicacy and intimated that the quarterback would be a whole lot better off if he didn't eat such "truck" between meals. Lanny was inclined to be irritable today, recognizing which fact, Chester diplomatically confined his entire attention to the contents of his

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paper bag while the car rumbled over the B Street Bridge after slowly and noisily trundling its way through most of the business portion of the town. By the time it had left the mills behind and had plunged into the country—it sped across fields and through woods with no heed to the highways—Lanny was ready to talk. Perhaps the crisp October breeze had blown his irritability away. At all events, after that they chatted pleasantly enough and watched the long line of shining rails rush toward them at breath-taking speed. Every few minutes the car slowed down at a tiny station and folks got off or on, and the two boys, now being in excellent spirits, viewed and discussed them and whimsically invented histories and careers for them. The big car pulled into Central Square in Springdale right on time and the visitors had nearly an hour in which to see the town and walk out to the High School athletic field. Springdale is less citified than Clearfield, even though it has a slightly larger population. Perhaps the fact that it is on the main line of the railroad and so nearer the city in point of time accounts for its popularity as a residence town. The State Agricultural Experiment Station lies just outside, and Chester, who was an enthusiastic chicken

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fancier, was all for going out there to see the poultry farm. But there was hardly time for that excursion, and so they contented themselves with wandering about the streets of the business section for half an hour, quenching their thirst at a soda fountain, standing for several minutes in front of the gaudy placards outside a moving-picture theater, and all the time pretending amused contempt for Springdale's village aspect. Then it behooved them to reach the field and they tore themselves away from the interesting display in a picture-dealer's window and moved out Maple Boulevard, their feet rustling through the fallen leaves that almost hid the sidewalk. They were soon part of a straggling procession of boys and girls and older folks all headed toward the athletic field. A number of merry-faced youths in striped brown-and-white uniforms rode past, and the throngs on the sidewalks waved their blue pennants with the white S's and shouted laughing comments after the visitors.

Lanny and Chester yielded their quarters and, being early, found places near the center of the field in the comfortable and commodious new grandstand. "This," said Lanny enviously, "is what we ought to have."

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“We will some day,” replied Chester. “It’s a peach of a stand, isn’t it?”

“Yes. How many do you suppose it holds? Five hundred?”

“Five hundred!” exclaimed Chester. “Nearer a thousand, I’ll bet!”

“It’s all very fine being presented with an athletic field,” said Lanny, “but it’s going to keep us poor. There’s taxes to pay on it, and they’re big, too. That’s the trouble with having your field right in town like ours is. Then we need a new fence all around and a new stand. We ought to have two stands, one back of the plate for baseball and one beyond first base for football. The committee said the reason they didn’t want to pay a coach this Fall was so they could fix the field up, but I haven’t seen them doing anything yet. There’s Weston coming on. What sort of a team have they got, Chester?”

“I guess it’s not much. They look pretty spry, though. Say, that was some punt, wasn’t it?”

The stand was beginning to fill and they had to edge along to make room for a party of boys whose conversation, overheard by the visitors, indicated that they were Springdale High School students.

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Once Lanny intercepted an inquiring look aimed at him by one of the group and for the first time experienced an uncomfortable realization of his rôle. After all, when he came to consider it, there was something sort of underhand about what he and Chester were doing, or, at any rate, it seemed so to him at that moment. He glanced at his companion and found Chester staring frowningly at the squad of brown-and-white players who were trotting past in signal practice. Perhaps feeling Lanny's eyes on him, he turned.

"I'm not crazy about this business," he growled. "It's a bit too sneaky."

"Nonsense," replied Lanny in low tones, as anxious to persuade himself as Chester, "we've got a perfect right to come here and see these chaps play if we want to, same as anyone else has."

"Just the same," responded the other stubbornly, "I don't like it. Next time Dick may send someone else. I don't like being a spy."

"You're not," returned Lanny half-heartedly, "you're a scout."

"Same thing," Chester growled. "And for goodness sake don't say anything to let on, Lanny. Those fellows next to you have been staring and

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whispering at a great rate. Bet you they suspect!”

“Let them!” said Lanny. “We’re not doing anything, I tell you. They do the same thing themselves. Didn’t they send scouts over to watch us last year when we played Corwin or Benton?”

“I dare say they did. Just the same——”

“If you say that again I’ll chuck you off the stand,” exploded Lanny in sudden irritation. “If you’re so touchy you’d better go home and let me do this.”

“If I was half as touchy as you are I’d jump in the river!” retorted Chester peevishly. “If you think I’m going to make notes with those fellows watching you’re mistaken. Bet you every one of them knows who we are!”

“Oh, get out! Why should they?”

“Why shouldn’t they, you mean. They’ve seen you play, haven’t they? And me, too. Even if they don’t recognize me you needn’t think you can get by with that white thatch of yours!”

“Well, what’s the difference? You don’t expect me to dye my hair and wear false whiskers, do you, you idiot?”

“No, I don’t, but stop whispering, for goodness sake, and don’t act like a conspirator! We’re giving

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the snap away as fast as we can talk. Talk out loud." And, suiting action to word, Chester began to discuss the weather with startling enthusiasm and vociferation, and kept it up until Lanny dug an elbow into his ribs and begged him to "cut it out, for the love of mud!" And that minute the Springdale team trotted on the field and a boy at the foot of the stand led a weak cheer. Evidently Springdale was too sure of the game to display much enthusiasm. Lanny and Chester gave their attention to the blue-stockinged players who had taken possession of the farther end of the field and, divided into two squads, were going through signals and practicing punts and field-goals.

"Recognize any of them?" asked Lanny.

Chester shook his head doubtfully. "Some of them look familiar, but I don't remember their names."

"That's the same quarter they had last year. I think his name is Kelly."

"Yes, I remember him. And the tall end on the further squad. He was on last year's eleven. That's a good punt, Lanny; forty-five yards, easy. I wonder who that chap is."

"The little fellow hasn't made but one goal so

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far,” said Lanny. “He’s had about five tries. There goes another, from the thirty. They ought to be pretty evenly matched at punting. What was the name of that center they had? Hill? That’s he coming this way; the fellow over there with the new trousers.”

“It wasn’t Hill, though; it was—Heath, wasn’t it?”

“That’s it, Heath. I’d like to know how many of last year’s fellows they’ve really got.”

“The paper said six, didn’t it?”

“Yes, but some of those were subs last year. Get on to the referee with the swell sweater! Lavender and yellow! That’s a peach of a combination, what?”

The players trotted off and, after the usual preliminaries, the teams faced each other and the game began. From the first Weston, which was a much lighter team, played a wide-open game and strove to outspeed her opponent. The first quarter proved unexpectedly exciting, for Springdale was by no means prepared for the sort of plays Weston introduced, and she was caught napping time and again. But Weston always lacked the final punch necessary to score, and the teams changed places with the hon-

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ors belonging to the visitors. In the second quarter the Blue met the adversary's attacks better, and, securing the ball, began a march down the field that ultimately took the pigskin to the ten-yard line. There, however, an attack on center was stopped and a skin-tackle play fared no better, and Kelly, the Springdale quarter, tossed a forward pass to the tall end whom Chester had recognized. But that youth, having made a perfect catch, fumbled the instant he was tackled and one of the brown-stockinged visitors fell on the ball. A long and high punt sent the pigskin to midfield after two downs had failed to advance it, and Springdale, in fourteen plays, craftily mixing line-plunges with wide end-runs and three forward passes, all of which were completed, soon pushed her left half over for a touchdown. No goal resulted and, with the score 6 to 0, the half ended soon after.

Lanny looked questioningly at Chester as the blanketed warriors left the field. "A dandy attack and no defense worth speaking of," was Chester's verdict.

Lanny nodded. "It's early for a perfect defense," he replied. "They've got team-play, though, all right. They're two or three weeks ahead of us on

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that. If we were to meet them next week they'd lick us about twenty to nothing.”

“Easy,” agreed Chester. “But we aren't. And I'll trust Dick to bring us around in plenty of time.”

“You really think he's doing pretty well, do you?” asked Lanny anxiously.

“Dick? I certainly do! Don't you?”

“Y-yes, only sometimes it seems to me that he's a little too—too cautious—or something. We're getting along awfully slowly, Chester.”

“Slow and sure,” replied the quarterback untroubledly. “These chaps will be in top-shape long before our game, if they don't watch out. What do you think of that forward-pass formation of theirs?”

“I don't know. It worked well enough, but it doesn't seem to me that sending three or four men down the field that way to protect the catcher is a good scheme. It shows where the pass is going, in the first place, and gives the other fellow a chance to get there. Seems to me Weston's scheme, which is about like ours, has it beat. I mean sending three or four men to different parts of the field and so keeping the other chaps guessing.”

“It worked pretty well, though,” mused Chester.

“Against a lighter team, yes. We could break

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it up without much trouble, I'll bet. It stands to reason that if you see a bunch of fellows getting together——”

“Suppose, though, Springdale sent another man to another place and threw to him instead?”

“Hm; well, that might go once. It would depend altogether on what sort of a defense the other team put up. Of course, if you're going to let a man go down the field uncovered there's bound to be trouble.”

“Did you notice the lateral pass Weston got off in the first quarter? It would have been a dandy if the runner had got away with the ball!”

“Yes, but he didn't. I don't believe those laterals are going to be what they're cracked up to be, Chester. They give the other team a lot of time to size up the situation and meet it. If you could pull them off quick, before the other fellows could guess them, they'd be fine. Dick has the right idea, I guess, when he claims that's the only way to work them——”

“Not so loud!” cautioned Chester. “Those chaps next to you are trying to listen.” Just then one of the chaps in question left his seat and sauntered down the aisle. Chester watched him suspiciously

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until he was lost in the gathering that filled the space between grandstand and field.

“So far I don’t think we’ve learned a great deal,” said Lanny thoughtfully. “That fullback of theirs is a good one and, in fact, their whole backfield works together finely and has a good deal of punch. And Kelly looks to me like a pretty nifty little quarter. But their line hasn’t shown much. The left side is weak. Look at the way Weston got through tackle there half a dozen times.”

“They certainly haven’t shown anything startlingly new, unless it’s that forward pass dodge of theirs. They use the same five-men-in-line formation on defense they used last year. I noticed, though, that they pass direct to the runner a good deal.”

“There’s nothing new in that,” said Lanny. “Here they come again. I’d like to see Weston get one over on them. I wonder if they’ve got a man who can kick field-goals.”

“If they have they ought to have used him last time,” replied the other. “They had a fine chance when they were on Springdale’s ten and couldn’t get through.”

“Perhaps they wanted a touchdown.”

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"Maybe, but Farrell used to say 'Hit first!' and it's a good scheme, Lanny. If Weston had got three points then you don't know what the effect on Springdale would have been."

"She'd have played harder," said Lanny.

"Yes, but playing harder doesn't always mean playing better," replied Chester, with a wise shake of his head. "I tell you, Lanny, there is a whole lot in getting first blood. I've seen it win lots and lots of times."

"Look down there," whispered Lanny suddenly. "See those two fellows looking up? Isn't the smaller chap the one who went down a while ago?"

"Yes," answered Chester softly. "And he's told the other fellow about us and he's recognized us. See them talking it over."

"Well, let them talk," grunted Lanny. "They've got nothing on us."

"No, but I don't like my job, just the same. There they go. Do you suppose they're going to look for a cop?"

"I dare say. Maybe they're going to send for the ambulance," replied Lanny with a grin. "Which way did they go?"

"I lost them. No, there they are, and— Say,

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isn't that Newman, the coach, they're talking to?"

"Where? Yes, by Jove, it is! He's looking up here now!"

"Put your head down! Don't let him see that white thatch of yours, Lanny!"

"I will not!" declared Lanny defiantly. "I'm not doing anything I'm ashamed of!"

"I suppose not," muttered Chester, "only, just the same, I sort of feel as if I were!"

"Buck up!" chuckled Lanny. "Here comes the Smart Aleck who went down to tell. Now watch the excitement when the glad news gets out!"

The boy in question pushed his way back to his seat and his companions leaned eagerly toward him. But, although Lanny and Chester frankly listened, they could hear only low whispering and, finally, chuckles. Lanny frowned.

"What are they choking about?" he asked. "They evidently think they've got a great joke on us."

"Probably think we don't know they're on to us. There goes the kick-off."

Lanny, however, was stealing a look toward his neighbors and was puzzled to find them all observing him with amusement. The boy next to him but one nodded impudently as he met Lanny's gaze.

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"How's everything in Clearfield?" he inquired politely.

"Fine, thanks," replied Lanny gravely. Chester turned an anxious countenance.

"Came over to see a real football team, I suppose," continued the Springdale youth with a grin.

Lanny nodded. "Yes, and I'm still looking for it," he answered.

"Keep right on looking," another boy chuckled. "You won't see much to-day, old top."

"I haven't so far. You fellows are playing your Scrubs, I see."

"Shut up, Lanny," whispered Chester.

"Yes, we are," was the reply from the adversary. "We're giving them a little work so as to get them in shape for Clearfield. No use using the regulars in that game, you know!"

"That's right," returned Lanny cheerfully. "Put your strongest team in the field. You'll need it!"

"We can beat you with the girl's basket-ball team," was the scathing retort. But Lanny, hearkening to Chester's entreaties, turned away without response, and the neighbors contented themselves for the rest of the game with talking at instead of to them.

It was soon made clear to the two scouts why the

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boys at the other end of the seat were amused. For the rest of that half, Springdale used only the most ordinary, old-fashioned football. It was quite plain that the Springdale coach, either because he feared the two visitors might really learn something of use to them, or because he wanted to have a joke on them, had instructed the team to show nothing. Lanny and Chester exchanged amused glances when, on Weston's twenty-yard line, with four to go on fourth down, Springdale chose to lose possession of the ball by a hopeless plunge at guard rather than make her distance by a trick play or even try for a field-goal. In the last quarter Springdale was hard pressed to keep her goal line from being crossed, for Weston, using every play in her programme, got as far as the six yards and might have gone over if, in her eagerness to score, she had not fumbled on the threshold. The game ended soon after that, the figures on the board unchanged, and Weston, possibly puzzled by her adversary's strange choice of plays in the last half, but evidently well pleased at the outcome, trotted off with the airs of a victor, while a small group of supporters at the far end of the stand waved brown-and-white banners and cheered proudly!

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When Lanny and Chester arose to leave they found that their neighbors in the row were waiting for them to pass out ahead. With a slight frown, Lanny led the way, crowding past the youths, and Chester followed silently. As they passed, the enemy indulged in pointed remarks to each other. "Seen any spies about to-day, Hal?" "I thought I saw a couple of the things." "Guess they didn't learn much, eh?" "No, it's a poor day for spies." "Too bad to come all that way for nothing!" "Yes, isn't it? Poor chaps, I'm sorry for them!"

Lanny only smiled untroubledly, and Chester, trying to look quite as if he heard nothing, gazed intently at the back of Lanny's head. But when he was squeezing his way past the last boy in the row a foot went out and Chester, stumbling, had to catch Lanny's shoulder to keep from falling. Instantly he turned and confronted the grinning face beside him.

"Don't do that," he said quietly, "or you'll get hurt."

There was something in Chester's countenance that silenced the retort on the Springdale youth's lips, and it was not until Lanny and Chester were in the aisle and on their way down that the fellow's

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courage returned. Then, raising his voice, he called:

“You wouldn’t hurt anyone, you Clearfield spy!”

A jeer from the others accompanied the taunt, but Chester kept straight ahead. He was thoroughly angry inside, but he knew that it would never do to accept that challenge. Chester was no coward, but he realized that it would look rather disgraceful for a member of the Clearfield team to visit Springdale as a scout and then get into a fracas! All the way down the stand, and, indeed, until they were well back into the town, they were uncomfortably conscious of the curious, amused, often unfriendly regard of the Springdale fellows, and more than once the word “Spy!” reached them as, striving to converse unconcernedly, they followed the returning throng toward the town.

But eventually they found themselves alone, and Lanny heaved a sigh of relief. “I wouldn’t do that again for a thousand dollars!” he said emphatically.

“And I wouldn’t do it for ten thousand,” replied Chester. “The next time Dick wants any dirty work like that done he may do it himself! The worst of it was we couldn’t fight!”

“Which,” replied Lanny dryly as they boarded a car, “was lucky for us!”

CHAPTER XII

THE BOARD OF STRATEGY

HOME again from a foreign shore," murmured Lanny as they climbed down from the car in the Square. "I wonder how the game came out. Bet you we got licked, Chester."

"I don't believe so. We'll ask somebody." He looked about him but caught sight of no one he knew. "There'll be some of the fellows in Castle's, I guess. Come on in. Want a soda?"

"No, thanks. I must be getting home. I'll call up Gordon on the 'phone and find out. Will you be around at Dick's after supper?"

"Yes. Wait a minute, Lanny! There's Fudge Shaw in there. He'll know about the game."

Lanny, who had started toward the crossing on his way home, rejoined Chester and together they pushed through the crowd at the doorway of the pop-

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ular drug store. At the right, in a corner which held a cushioned settee and two or three small wire-legged tables, sat Fudge. An emaciated rubber plant hung its leaves above his head, a tall glass of ice-cream soda was in one hand and a dripping spoon in the other, and his eyes were fixed ecstatically on the big glass jar which, suspended in the nearer window, glowed with carmine and purple.

"It's a shame to wake him," chuckled Chester, as they wormed their way through the throng. "What an awful looking mess he's eating!"

"How did the game come out, Fudge?" demanded Lanny anxiously.

Fudge's rapt gaze fell slowly away from the hypnotic brilliancy. "Eh?" he murmured.

Lanny impatiently repeated the question, while Fudge blinked and brought his thoughts back with an evident effort.

"Hello, fellows! Game? Oh, they beat us. Thirteen to seven."

"What do you know about that?" demanded Lanny disgustedly. "Isn't that the dickens?"

"How did they do it, Fudge?" asked Chester.

"Made two touchdowns to our one," replied Fudge, dipping his spoon in the harlequin concoc-

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tion and conveying a liberal portion of it to his mouth.

"Oh, cut out the comedy," said Lanny. "What was the matter with our team?"

"Search me," replied Fudge, in an injured tone. "We just couldn't get started, it seemed. Logan scored in the first period and the second, and we didn't do anything until about five minutes before the end of the game. Then that fellow Hull shot a forward off to Gordon and Gordie got away with it for about thirty yards. After that they couldn't stop us and Nelson Beaton went over for the touch-down."

"What sort of a game did Logan play?" asked Lanny, plainly disconsolate.

"Fine! They had a grand time running around our ends, or they did until Dick put Gordon Merrick in for Felker. Felker was rotten to-day on defense. Gee, but Gordie played a great little game after he got in! And, say, Lanny, that fellow Hull is a wonder! You ought to have seen the way he fooled those fellows on quarterback runs! It was fine!"

"It must have been if we got licked like that!" said Lanny. "Was McCoy good?"

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"I guess so. Pretty fair. We didn't seem able to stop them outside of tackles, though. That right half of theirs made a seventy-yard run one time. That was when they got their first touchdown. They fooled us on a fake-kick play and sent a back around Felker's end from our fifteen yards."

"I knew we'd get licked," muttered Lanny. "We must have played a solid-ivory sort of game, Chester!"

"You ought to hear the fellows roasting the team afterwards," chuckled Fudge, struggling with another spoonful of ice-cream. "Dick, too. They say he didn't more than half try to win. He put in six subs in the last half. What sort of a way is that?"

"I take it you didn't get in," said Chester, sarcastically.

"I'm on the Scrub," replied Fudge, untroubledly. "Bet you I could have done as well as Thad Brimmer did, though. How was the Springdale game, Lanny?"

"Pretty good," Lanny replied absently. "Six to nothing, Springdale. Well, I must be getting on. See you later, Chester."

Chester nodded and Lanny went out. "He feels pretty bad about it, I guess," said Chester.

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"He'd have felt worse if he'd been here and seen it," replied Fudge, philosophically. "It was p, u, n, k, punk!"

"Say, for goodness sake, what sort of a mess is that you're eating?" asked Chester, his curiosity at last demanding satisfaction.

"This?" asked Fudge, stirring his spoon about in the glass and watching the resultant blending of colors with admiring eyes. "This is what I call an Opalescent Dream."

"Looks more like a nightmare! What's in it?"

"Strawberry and chocolate and lemon ice-cream and blood-orange sirup. You take a third of each and——"

But Chester, with a gesture eloquent of repugnance, had flown. Fudge smiled calmly and stirred again with still more interesting results. "Some folks don't know what's good," he murmured blissfully.

The Board of Strategy, as George Cotner chose to call it, met in Dick's parlor that evening at half-past seven, Dick, Lanny, Cottrell and Cotner present. Dick disposed of the afternoon's contest with Logan in few words.

"They outplayed us," he said frankly. "Our line

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was fully as good as theirs, I think, but their backs were better. Besides, they had more plays and used them well. We were handicapped by a lack of plays and those we had didn't fool them. They made practically all of their gains around our tackles and couldn't make much impression on the line. They got their first touchdown as the result of a fine run by Showalter, their right half, which put the ball on our thirteen yards. From there they took it over in one play, around our right end. Felker was neatly boxed and they had no trouble. Their next score was after they had worked our ends and thrown a forward pass for gains that took them from the middle of the field to our twelve yards. They finally got through Wayland for the last half-yard. They made twelve first downs to our seven, I believe. We outpunted them by about five yards on an average. Hull, who took your place, Chester, ran the team very well and was very clever at carrying the ball. He promises remarkably well and ought to make a first-class quarter by next Fall. We used six substitutes in the third and fourth quarters. Merrick at right end showed up well and made a clever catch of a forward pass and a thirty-yard run that made possible our touchdown. On

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the whole, the substitutes did good work. I'm sorry we couldn't have won, Lanny, but the game showed us our weaknesses, and that's something. Now, what did you fellows learn at Springdale?"

"Mighty little," answered Lanny. "They got on to us and stalled all through the last half."

"What about the first half?" asked Dick.

"Weston played all around them in the first quarter. Used a lot of queer stunts from open formation, like double-passes back of the line, with an end breaking through or a half running wide. The plays weren't much, but Springdale didn't get on to them for a while. In the second period she opened her line out and dropped an extra man behind it. That worked better. She made her score by pretty clever work. Got off three dandy forward passes and mixed her plays up well."

"What formation did she use on attack?" asked Dick.

"Same as last year. For kicking she played her ends way out. It wasn't a fair test, though, for Weston is a light team and couldn't do much with the Springdale line. If she'd use that kicking formation against us we could smear her every time, I guess."

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Dick continued his questions, making notes from the information he received, and at last said, with a smile: "On the whole, I think you chaps managed to find out a good deal. Still, it's pretty evident that Springdale didn't show anything new. She wouldn't, I suppose, so early in the season. We'll see what the Springdale paper says Monday about the game."

"Look here, Dick," said Chester, "what's the—the ethics of that sort of thing?"

"What sort of thing, Chester?"

"Why, scouting, as we call it; spying on the other fellow."

"I don't know," replied Dick slowly. "I don't think I've ever considered it. Why do you ask?"

"Because I felt like an awful sneak over there this afternoon," was the answer. "So did Lanny, only he wouldn't own up to it."

"Everyone does it," observed George Cotner.

"That doesn't make it right, though," said Chester doggedly. "I don't believe it is right, either. If it were I wouldn't have felt so like a—a fox!"

"I'm sorry," said Dick. "I wouldn't have asked you to do it if I'd known you were going to feel that way about it." He jabbed a pencil thoughtfully into the tablecloth. Then, "Honestly, fellows, I don't

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know what to say about it. As George says, everyone does it; colleges and schools everywhere. I suppose that if we look on football as a sort of athletic warfare—to coin a term—we have every right to spy on the enemy in order to learn, as in real warfare, what his condition is and what his plans may be.”

“Surest thing you know!” agreed George.

“On the other hand, if we look at football as merely a—a gentleman’s pastime, the spying part is hard to defend. It’s rather a difficult question to answer, Chester.”

“A football campaign,” declared George convincingly, “is exactly like real war. We form our army, we train it, we map out a campaign, we plan strategies. If the enemy has weak spots in its—its battle-line we want to know it so we can throw the brunt of our attack there. As long as the other fellow doesn’t hide behind fences and hold secret practice we’ve got a perfect right to go and watch him and learn what we can. It’s done all the time. All the big colleges do it and I’ve never heard any objections made before. Why, bless you, fellows, Springdale will be over here scouting in a couple of weeks!”

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"Just the same," returned Chester, using his favorite expression, and bringing a smile to Lanny's face, "no more of it for me, *if you please!*"

"Is that how you feel, Lanny?" Dick inquired.

"I guess it is, Dick. I don't say I wouldn't do it again if you say it's all fair and right, but I didn't like it to-day very much. For my part, I can't see why it should be necessary. If all the teams agreed not to do it I suppose we'd get on just as well. After all, it doesn't do much good, I guess. A team doesn't show its real stuff until its big game. I think we could get on without it."

"I'm perfectly willing to try," said Dick. "Somehow, now that you mention it, it doesn't seem quite—well, gentlemanly. But that raises the question, Lanny, of how far we *can* go and act like gentlemen. Is it fair, for instance, to read about the other team's progress in the newspapers?"

"Quite, I'd say," replied Lanny. "Seems to me that's different. If information gets into the papers that's their lookout, and anyone has a right to read it."

"If scouts get into their grandstand that's their business, too," said George. "What's the difference?"

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"The difference is," answered Chester, "that they are willing the newspaper stuff should be published, but they aren't willing that we should see them play. And they can't keep us out if we have the money to buy tickets. You can talk your head off, George, but I know there is a difference."

"I can't see it!"

"It's there, just the same," muttered Chester.

"Well, let's agree that it is wrong, fellows; or, at least, bad form, a little underhand, a little ungentlemanly. Let's make a rule not to do it. We'll play it safe, in other words." This from Dick.

"That's all right if you can get the other fellow to cut it out too," demurred George, "but if he doesn't he's got a big advantage over us. I call that pretty crazy business."

"Oh, let's be crazy, then," exclaimed Lanny. "Fair sport is fair sport, but spying isn't! It's sneaky stuff! Let's call it off."

"Right-o," agreed Chester. "And I dare say when Springdale learns that we've stopped it she'll stop it too."

"She's not likely to believe we have stopped it," observed George dryly, "after seeing you two fellows over there this afternoon."

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"No; but she'll believe it after awhile," said Dick cheerfully. "So we'll call that settled. Now then, let's see what we've learned to-day." He picked his memorandum book from the table and began to turn the leaves. "Personally, I'm pretty well pleased with this Logan game. It's shown up a whole lot of weak places, fellows, and you can't make repairs until you learn where the breaks are. If we can get through the Corwin game with no worse results we'll be doing pretty well."

"Great Scott!" groaned Lanny. "Don't tell me we've got to take another licking next week!"

"I hope not, but if we are licked and we get through with no injuries, as we did to-day, and we find out our mistakes as well as we did to-day, I'll be satisfied."

"The school won't," replied Lanny glumly. "Three defeats out of five games would be going it pretty strong, Dick."

"Fairly," returned the coach untroubledly. "So would being beaten by Springdale, Lanny."

"Of course, but—oh, well, you know best, I dare say," Lanny sighed. "If it wasn't that I happen to be captain, Dick——"

"There's a good deal of growling about to-day's

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defeat," observed George Cotner. "Of course, fellows always do kick when the team loses and cheer like mad when it wins. Still, I'm inclined to think it might be a good plan to—well, to make a little extra effort and win next week's game, Dick. Just for the—er—the look of the thing, you know."

"Bless the look of the thing," said Dick placidly. "We'll win if we can do it without disturbing the plan of development we've settled on. If we lose, the fellows will just have to howl. What we've got to do is keep our eyes on the Eighteenth of November!"

"You bet!" said Chester. "Who cares whether Corwin is beaten or not? Or Benton, or Lester-ville? We want to lick Springdale! That's what we're here for, isn't it?"

"I dare say," agreed George; "but isn't there always the danger of losing so many games that the team will think it *can't* win?"

"You mean it might develop the habit of defeat?" laughed Dick. "That's a new idea, George. I didn't know you were such a psychologist."

"I'm not, I'm a Methodist," retorted the manager.

"There may be something in your theory,

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though," Dick continued, "and so I guess it will be best to let them win once in awhile." Dick's eyes twinkled as he turned to Lanny's somewhat disconsolate countenance. "Which game on the rest of the schedule would you rather win, Lanny?"

"What!" exclaimed the captain. "Do you mean that—" Then he caught the gleam of laughter in Dick's eyes and grinned relievedly. "We'll beat the grads," he said. "How'll that do?"

"Finely! So let's get busy and see where we stand." Dick took up his memorandum again. "Move up here, George, and let me have those notes of yours. That's the ticket. Now then, starting with the plays we used——"

CHAPTER XIII

A TRIP TO THE CITY

ON Monday, Morris and his sister and May Burnham made the journey to New York. Mr. Brent had advanced to them the difference between what had been paid in by subscribers to the Fund and the ninety dollars at which they had figured the purchases. They set off in fine spirits, for the day was what Morris called a "perfect corker," and all were flushed with the spirit of adventure. They had luncheon on the train, Morris acting the part of host, and reached the Grand Central Terminal a few minutes after they had finished. Visits to New York were infrequent enough to make them feel quite breathlessly excited as they followed Morris to the street. Morris was all for getting to the furniture store by subway, but the girls wanted to see the sights, they declared, and refused to be beguiled underground.

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"I always feel like a human mole down there," said Louise. "And I'm frightened half to death besides."

"And we want to see the streets and the shops and the people," added May. "It's a perfect waste of opportunity to come to New York and spend half your time in subways, Morris!"

So Morris gave in with fairly good grace, grumbling a little at the foolishness of girls, and boarded a surface car. He made the mistake of turning eastward instead of toward the west when they alighted at Eighteenth Street and had to stand some joking from his companions when the error was discovered. Marsden's proved to be a huge establishment occupying a building of its own, with floor after floor of wonderful things. For over an hour they trotted around, in and out of elevators, up and down endless aisles, at the heels of a most imposing gentleman in a frock coat and immaculate gray trousers. Morris declared afterwards that he didn't have much chance to see the furniture he was all the time admiring the creases in those trousers and wondering whether they were starched! May, on the other hand, confessed that she had been quite hypnotized by the salesman's lovely whiskers! So, if

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we believe them, Louise was the only member of the Purchasing Committee able to give her entire attention to the matter at hand. And Louise did, occasionally reprimanding the others for their levity, or begging them to please help her decide. It was, in fact, really Louise who made the purchases, for when the others were not exchanging whispered jokes they were usually wandering around far from the article in discussion.

It was no easy task to decide, either, for Marsden's showed so many styles and values that Louise was quite at sea. But at last everything on the list was accounted for and, to their delight, the total, after deducting the discount, was well under the ninety dollars. Even the filing-cabinet, which Morris had predicted they would have to look elsewhere for, was obtainable at Marsden's. At the last, because they still had several dollars left unexpended, Louise ordered a handsome wastebasket of Japanese woven ware, the color of which almost exactly matched the mahogany of the other things, on her own authority. They gave Mr. Brent's address, obtained the salesman's promise to have the goods shipped by freight not later than the next afternoon, paid the bill and emerged triumphant.

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"I think we did beautifully," exulted May as they joined the throng on the sidewalk outside. "And we have nearly four dollars left!"

"Yes," agreed Morris, with a grin, "I think we did pretty well myself. I don't want to seem to be taking too much credit, but I must say that without my assistance in there——"

"*Your* assistance!" interrupted Louise almost crossly. "You were both about as much use as—nothing at all! I think you acted horribly. I know that man thought you were crazy."

"He's got nothing on me, then," laughed Morris. "I'm mighty sure I thought he was! Say, if the salesmen dress the way he does, Sis, what do you suppose Marsden himself wears? Bet you he's covered with purple velvet and gold lace. Gee, I'd like to see him!"

For another hour or more the two girls shopped, Morris dangling along and complaining at every doorway. They didn't buy much, but they had the finest sort of a good time and, or so Morris averred, were in such a condition of amazed and delighted awe that their eyes very nearly popped from their heads! And then, of a sudden, Morris, who had been standing on first one foot and then the other,

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and who had been buffeted and pushed and squeezed and jammed, and who was more tired than if he had put in a hard two hours of football practice, discovered to his joy and relief that they had just time to reach the station to get the train home, and literally dragged the girls from the store they were in. But before they could reach the car-line the brilliant windows of a famous confectioner sprang into view and May squealed with delight and refused to go home until she had had an ice-cream soda. After that it was a close shave, but they eventually reached the train before it pulled out and, thoroughly breathless and tired, sank into their seats and viewed each other in triumph.

"I've had the loveliest time," announced Louise exultantly, "and I'm simply tired—to—death!"

"Tired!" grumbled Morris. "Don't talk to me about being tired! I'm one big ache from head to toes, and my feet feel as if they'd been pounded by a spile-driver! I don't mind *buying* things, but when it comes to *shopping—excuse me!*"

And the odd part of it was that Morris's tiredness stayed with him all the next day, and when, at practice, he tried to kick some goals in the course of his half-hour instruction of the candidates under his



“I’ve had the loveliest time,” announced Louise exultantly.”

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charge, he made awful misses! The Scrubs played the Varsity to a standstill that afternoon, and all the driving of which Dick and Lanny were capable, and all the entreaties of Chester Cottrell and of Perry Hull, who took his place finally, failed to bring about a score. The Scrubs were as proud as turkey cocks and remained so until the next day, when, smarting under the ignominy of those forty scoreless minutes, the Varsity came back and literally tore the other team wide open and scored three touchdowns, two of which Morris converted into goals. The best that the Scrub Team could do was to force a safety on the Varsity when Tupper misjudged a punt.

That was on Wednesday. Thursday passed without a scrimmage since Dick was not satisfied with the tackling and handling of the ball. Several of the Varsity had been showing the weakest sort of work at tackling and fumbles had been far too frequent. And so on Thursday there was a hard drill at the dummy and a lot of work in essentials. Cable took the linemen off to a corner of the field and gave them a long session in blocking and breaking through, and Morris kept his pupils busy in front of a goal. It must be confessed that Morris was not a huge success as an instructor. He knew how to kick goals

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from placement and from drops, and he was a good punter, but when it came to imparting his knowledge to George Tupper and Nelson Beaton, he was far less skillful. The explanation was that he didn't really know how he obtained his results, and if one doesn't know how he does a thing, it's well-nigh impossible to teach another! Morris took infinite trouble, for he was fully as enthusiastic as Dick about developing the kickers, and he worked as hard as he knew how, but his method of correcting a pupil was to say, "No, you don't get it, George. Now watch me. See? One hand on each side—get your lacings right—sight your goal—drop it—swing—There you are! See what I mean?" And Tupper or Beaton would assent doubtfully and, perhaps, do no better the next time. Still, George Tupper had made progress; that couldn't be denied; and Dick hoped for the best and silently wished he knew more about the gentle art of drop- and placement-kicking himself.

On Friday the team showed some improvement as a result of the previous day's practice, and in the short and not very hard scrimmage with the Scrubs managed to get by without fumbling. But a spell of unseasonably warm weather had had its effect on

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the players of both teams and there were distinct signs of sluggishness visible. Dick read the signs and called an early halt. He had been expecting a slump for several days and now, he told himself, it had arrived. He was relieved rather than troubled, however, for if there must be a slump—and there usually is at some time during a football season—it was better to have it now than two weeks, or even a week later. He hoped for a change of weather on the morrow, but scarcely dared expect it.

And it didn't come. If anything, Saturday was warmer and more enervating than Friday had been, and many of the seventeen players whom Dick took to Corwin at noon looked dragged and tired. Not a few more were plainly irritable, always a bad sign, and Dick secretly feared that Lanny was not destined to be much pleased with the outcome of the afternoon's game.

But if the Varsity was not in the best of condition, little fault could be found with the Scrubs that afternoon. Perhaps the prospect of having a real game with an outside team buoyed them up and caused them to forget the fact that they had been listless the day before. At all events, they trotted on to the field for the contest with the North

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Side team looking much alive. Will Scott, who had not been taken along to Corwin with the Varsity, had been given the management of the Scrubs for the occasion, which meant that he had his hands pretty full. Not that the players demanded any attention from him, but he had to look after the contest itself; find boys to take money at the two gates, see that Danny Shore's players were looked after on arrival, arrange for a referee, an umpire and a head linesman, find a youth to take one end of the ten-yard chain and perform a number of other duties, which, since he had never performed them before, caused him a condition of mind and body closely approaching collapse.

The public turned out generously for that much-heralded game. A large portion of the audience was composed of workers in the factories, who were plainly there for two things; to have a good time—and having a good time with them entailed making a certain amount of noise—and to see their champions win. When the last spectator had entered and Will Scott hurriedly counted the proceeds, he discovered that something over three hundred and twenty persons had paid their dimes at the gates, which, everything considered, was a good showing.

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The Scrubs were playing to-day under the title of the High School Second Team, a title which carried more dignity and seemed better calculated to attract an audience. Two of the Varsity substitutes who were not taken to Corwin lent their strength to Captain Nostrand's team. These were Grover, who took Jones's place at left end, and McCoy, who ousted Burns at left half. Fudge Shaw was at center, a position which Fudge had been filling most creditably.

So far as enthusiasm went, that game was notable. The North Siders rooted loudly and continuously, while the High School adherents, encouraged by the enemy to expressions of loyalty, greeted the Second with a hearty cheer when it appeared, and indulged in further encouragement of a similar nature as the game progressed. The North Siders were older than their opponents and averaged, especially in the line, much heavier. But their play was scarcely more than elemental, and appeared to be built around two very clever backs, Wightson and Larue. The first of these was a raw-boned Welshman of about twenty, and the second a black-haired little French Canadian who seemed to be built of steel, and went into the enemy like a human bullet, and was just about

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as hard to stop. Danny Shores, red-headed and shrill-voiced, played quarterback and made up by grim determination for what he lacked in experience and science.

It was a very good game, in spite of its raggedness. Fumbles were plentiful on both sides, and the North Side backs continually missed the signals. The Seconds showed an over-eagerness that lost them more than it gained, and Pete Farrar, who played quarter, had his hands more than full in trying to steady them down. The High School players got the jump on the adversary in the first few minutes of the game, and so bewildered them by open plays that, almost before anyone realized what was happening, they were down on their opponents' ten-yard line with every indication of scoring. But an unlucky fumble spoiled their chance of a touchdown, a fumble which red-headed Danny Shores recovered by plunging between Fudge's sturdy legs.

CHAPTER XIV

AN UNWILLING HERO

NORTH SIDE used Wightson and Larue continuously, hurling them against the line from tackle to tackle and managing to work the ball from under the goal well into the middle of the field. There, however, the Second, surmising that attacks outside the tackles were not included in the enemy's present plans, concentrated its secondary defense behind the center of its line and stopped the advance, North Side being forced to kick. The punt was poor and rolled out near the adversary's forty yards, and from there the Second began another advance. But a fumble again lost ground and a punt went over the goal line. On a third try from their twenty yards, the North Siders managed to get Wightson clear for a twelve-yard run. A minute later Larue also squirmed free and, with the factory workers yel-

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ling their lungs out in the stand and along the side lines, North Side passed the middle of the field, and for the first time had the pigskin in High School territory.

They played a hard and desperate game, caring nothing for knocks and bruises; in fact, showing a willingness to stand any sort of punishment so long as they gained ground. Concentrating their attack on Gage, at left guard, they wore that youth down, so that, finally, on the Second's thirty-two yards, that player was withdrawn to recover his breath and nurse his injuries, and Johnson took his place. Johnson was a big Senior who knew little football, but who looked so imposing and mighty that the North Side transferred its attentions to the other guard. But Captain Nostrand was not so easy a proposition as Gage had proved, and the enemy's advance was stopped. A desperate attempt to get a forward pass across the goal line from the thirty yards failed, and the twelve-minute period came to an end.

High School punted on second down when play was resumed and Grover recovered the ball after a fumble by Quarterback Shores on the North Siders' thirty-yard line. From there, in eleven plays, mixing forward passes with fake-kicks and end

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runs, High School scored, sending McCoy through right tackle for two yards and a touchdown. Brimmer, who essayed to kick the goal, failed by a narrow margin.

There was no more scoring in that half, although the North Siders were threatening High School's goal when the whistle blew. Undismayed, the audience from across the river consumed peanuts and popcorn and enjoyed themselves noisily. Nostrand returned Gage to the line when play began again and put Burns in for Sawin at right half. Getting the pigskin on the kick-off, North Side, with one or two substitutes in her line, returned to her line-bucking tactics, evidently resolved to tire out and wear down the High School defense. Wightson was the marvel of that contest. How he could perform the work that was given to him and keep on his feet, no one understood. He was always good for a short gain and seldom failed to get clear of the first defense. Only the fine work of McCoy and Burns, the latter returned to the backfield on account of his defensive ability, saved the day time after time, for, once free, the big Welshman could never have been stopped. Pete Farrar, with his one hundred and forty-odd pounds, would have been tossed aside like a chip

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had he ever been called on to get between Wightson and the goal line! Now and then, but infrequently during the first three periods, Larue was called on, but for the most part it was the Welshman who took the ball and banged himself, head down, against the opposing line, much as an enraged bull might have assaulted a stone wall. High School was fortunate in being able to know beforehand pretty well where the attack was coming, since Danny Shores had but few plays and those were not difficult to guess, and so was able to put her backfield defenses where it would do the most good. But for all of that, their line was showing wear and tear before that third quarter was over. North Side did not deliberately "mix it up," and only one penalty was meted out to her because of unnecessary roughness, but her savage and desperate attacks were bound to tell. Fudge was wearing a bloody nose, which gave him a most disreputable appearance, and several other linemen showed marks of battle when the third quarter ended.

By that time the North Side supporters had become impatient and were howling for a touchdown, calling on the players individually to distinguish themselves. "Get into 'em, Billy! What you scared

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of?" "Eat 'em up, Pat! Show us what you know!" "Give us a touchdown now! Are you goin' to let 'em lick yer?" "Where's yer fight, Terry? Kill 'em, boy, kill 'em!" "Give us a score, Danny! Let's do 'em up, now."

As if in obedience to such promptings, North Side began again harder, more desperately than ever. A penalty for holding put High School back to her twenty-three yards. An end run gained but a yard, and Brimmer punted almost straight into air. When the ball stopped rolling it was North Side's on High School's thirty-two yards. Yells of delight and encouragement came from the stand, and Danny hurled Wightson at the line again. Two yards resulted, McCoy stopping the runner. Larue made four on left tackle and was pulled down by Brimmer. Wightson again at Fudge's position and three yards more are gained. Wightson at right guard and first down made.

Twenty to go now. Danny Shores himself took the ball but made no gain. Then Wightson made three and the fullback two, and, with five to gain on fourth down, Danny faked a place-kick and sent Wightson straight into the line, plunging, dodging, straining, and made the distance by a bare two

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inches, as the tape showed! Pandemonium reigned in the North Siders' camp. Entreaties, commands, threats of personal violence were hurled at the players! High School gathered herself compactly, concentrating her whole strength behind the center of her line. For North Side had tried no end of plays and seemed not to have included them in her education. But Danny Shores was red-headed, and so is a fox. A try at the center yielded a scant two feet and took the ball to the nine yards. Then the pigskin was shot back to Larue and that swarthy-faced little Canuck shot around Grover's end like a weasel and planted the ball just behind the left goal-post!

The North Side supporters were all for rushing onto the field and carrying the heroic Larue around on their shoulders, and it was all that Will Scott and the officials, aided by most of the visiting team, could do to persuade them to postpone that ceremony. When order had been restored and the delighted and noisily appreciative supporters had been cajoled back of the side line again, Danny essayed to kick the goal. But North Side's chance to win the game there and then was lost, for the ball went well under the cross-bar, and High School shouted its relief.

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There were still six minutes of playing time remaining, and Captain Nostrand called on his team to make the most of it. High School kicked off and North Side caught and ran back to her fifteen yards. Larue now took the brunt of the work, but his forte was broken field running, and his attempts at the line were less successful than Wightson's. Nevertheless, North Side made first down twice and took the ball to her forty yards before she was forced to punt. Farrar caught on High School's thirty-three and, behind good interference, ran back to midfield. There a fumble lost a down, a forward pass failed, and Brimmer punted to the opponent's twenty. Danny Shores made the catch, but was downed without gain and Larue tried to win through the left of the line without success. A fumble by Larue cost North Side half a dozen yards, and the ball sailed through the air to midfield again. Once more Farrar caught and ran back, reeling off ten or twelve yards before he was stopped. A forward pass, Farrar to Smith, gained seven and McCoy made it first down off left tackle. From the thirty-yard line High School advanced to the six, mixing her plays bafflingly and fighting with desperation. And then, once more on the threshold of a score, luck deserted

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her. Farrar, attempting a forward pass to Grover, found that end out of position for the catch, and so tried, in forlorn hope, to gain around the other side. But he was caught well back of the line and, on third down, the ball went into play on the twelve yards. A double pass to Brimmer for a plunge at the left of the line failed miserably and, as a last resort, a field-goal was attempted. But Brimmer never had a chance to get the ball away, for the whole right side of High School's line crumpled before the savage attack of the enemy, and the fullback was downed with the pigskin in his hands.

Then Fortune appeared to desert the home team utterly. Larue got clear through, eluding the secondary defense as though he was greased, and put forty yards behind him before Farrar, running desperately, brought him down from behind. From midfield to High School's fifteen-yard line plunged the triumphant North Siders. High School was weakening every minute now. Nostrand put in two fresh linemen and replaced Burns with Sawin, but the advance went on, Larue finding all sorts of holes to squirm through, and the redoubtable Wightson, rested and chafing under inactivity, returned to the

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attack with redoubled fury, hurling himself at the faltering High School line for good gains.

With two minutes left and the ball just inside the third white line, High School fought for time, hopeless now of victory and only seeking to stave off defeat. Twice the whistle shrilled while some real or imaginary injury was looked to, and each time North Side raged like so many tigers who had tasted blood.

“One minute and fifty-six seconds,” proclaimed the Timer.

“All right now, fellows!” piped Danny. “Over with it! Here’s where we score again!”

“Hold them, Scrub!” shouted Nostrand hoarsely, and, “Throw ’em back!” yelled Farrar. “Get down there, Shaw! Play low, fellows! Get under ’em and throw ’em back!”

Then—well, no one ever had a very clear idea of what immediately ensued. All that is known is that somewhere between the North Side center and Wightson the ball went astray and that for the longest four seconds on record it bobbed and trickled about under the feet of fully half the contending players. But after that what happened was just this. Fudge Shaw, who, perhaps, owed his presence at

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center more to his ability to keep his eyes on the ball than to any other feature of his playing, was one of the first to cry "Ball! Ball!" Also, he was one of the first to break through. Unfortunately, he came through on his hands and knees and his first effort to capture the erratic pigskin only sent it further afield. But Fudge, by a miracle of spontaneity that must have shocked his system dreadfully, rolled to his feet, seized the bobbing ball from under the outstretched hands of a North Side player and staggered off with it!

Having done that much, Fudge was willing to call a halt, and he proved it by stopping stock-still and, looking back, inviting someone to lay him low. But, as it happened, he was for the moment unchallenged, and instead of a tackle he received the exultant, imperious, entreating cries of his teammates to "Run, Shaw!" "Go it, Fudge!" He heard those cries plainly, in spite of the countercries from the momentarily befuddled enemy, and, although they chimed in not at all with his inclinations, he obeyed them and started, somewhat irresolutely, toward the far-distant goal.

Fudge was not built for speed. There was no unnecessary fat on his somewhat rotund body, but

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his legs were short and stocky and his strides, lengthen them as he might, covered scant territory. But, despairingly he ran, with the enemy momentarily drawing nearer and nearer, a grim, flaming-haired Danny, with "Danger" written all over him, in the lead. To say that Fudge despaired because the enemy promised to stop his flight would be wide of the truth. Fudge despaired because they didn't hurry up and do it! Fudge had not the slightest desire in all the wide, wide world to race at break-neck speed down that interminable field and become a hero. The price was too large! If someone would only take the ball from him, it would be fine! And, as if in answer to Fudge's wish, Danny Shores gained until he was close behind. And Fudge, half closing his eyes, awaited the shock of that tackle.

But it didn't come! Feet spurned the turf behind him, a purple-stockinged figure raced up, Danny Shores went reeling to earth and Fudge was again out of danger, free to carry that ball in triumph over some eighty yards!

The player who had cleared Danny from his course was the fleet-footed Grover and with a world of entreaty in his eyes and voice, Fudge half turned,

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held the pigskin out and faltered laboredly "Take it!"

But Grover had shot his bolt. He fell behind. Only his voice followed Fudge: "Run, Shaw! You've got it!"

So poor Fudge, his short legs twinkling so fast that they became a mere purplish-yellow blur, ran! And behind him came friend and foe. Midfield now, and still uncaptured! Only fifty yards more! Only! The stand was shouting wildly. From the side lines, where raced shrieking partisans of the visitors, came cries of rage, of encouragement, of despair! One by one the High School interference, hastily formed but effective, performed their duty and fell behind, and now only one of the enemy pursued and only one of the High School players followed. At the forty yards Fudge was gasping painfully for breath. At the thirty he was ready, more than ready to give up. If only, thought Fudge, someone would pull him down! He resented the fact that he was allowed to run his legs off, and held it in for weeks against Danny Shores' team that they had so easily allowed themselves to be put out of the running!

At the twenty-yard line Fudge saw the goal-

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posts distinctly for the first time and the hope that perhaps, after all, he might reach them without dying first came to him and encouraged him. He never once looked back. He only hoped each moment that hands would seize him and pull him to earth. But Fudge's hope was idle, for, near the fifteen-yard line, Farrar made a final despairing effort, flung himself in the path of the pursuing North Sider and together they subsided, too weak to move for many moments. And then, with the shouts of the spectators beating on his ears like the sound of distant surf, Fudge, unwilling hero of the contest, fell across the last white line and sank into peaceful coma!

CHAPTER XV

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WHILE Fudge, completely exhausted, was being restored to usefulness, Captain Nostrand converted the six points to seven by an easy goal. And before Fudge, assisted by admiring team-mates, had reached the bench the game was over, High School had won, 13 to 6, the North Siders were dejectedly leaving the field and Fudge had leaped into fame! A full eighty-five yards, they called that run, which, allowing for slight exaggeration born of enthusiasm, it was. But Fudge, with becoming modesty, insisted that it hadn't been a foot over eighty-three! Back in the dressing-room, having recovered breath and presence of mind, Fudge rendered his version of the feat to a respectfully attentive audience.

"I saw the fumble and tried to get through, but

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their center blocked me off and I had to crawl under him. I could almost reach the ball, but not quite; I touched it, I think. Then I dived across for it, knocking a couple of North Siders out of my way, and picked it up right under the nose of that fellow Wightson. My, but he was mad! Then I started down the field, and——”

“What did you stop for?” asked some one puzzledly.

Fudge’s modesty again asserted itself. “Well,” he answered frankly, “I’m no sprinter; not built for it. I can run a long time, but I’m not fast, if you see what I mean. So I thought that if I could pass the ball to one of you fellows who was a better sprinter I’d do it. You see, it didn’t matter who made the runs so long as we got the touchdown.” Faint murmurs of admiration greeted this noble sentiment. Pete Farrar’s countenance expressed slight amazement. It didn’t sound quite like Fudge. Still, that youth’s expression was so guileless that Pete concluded that perhaps, after all, Fudge was as unselfish as he pictured himself. “There was no one to take it, though,” continued the hero, warming to the narrative; “and so I saw that I’d have to make the score myself. Shores was right after me,

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and a lot of the others too. Once Shores almost had me, but I swung aside——”

“It was Grover who put Shores out,” said Sawin.

“I know. It was good work, too,” declared Fudge heartily. “But he wouldn’t have caught me, because I’d got my second-wind by that time, and the rest was easy. With the start I had none of them could have caught me.”

“Hm,” said Captain Nostrand, “you sort of hate yourself, don’t you, Fudge?”

But the consensus of opinion was that Nostrand’s sarcasm was in poor taste, although perhaps excusable to some extent since envy is a common failing. Nor was Sprague McCoy’s remark thought any better of. McCoy chuckled and observed: “I thought once or twice, Fudge, you were going to lie down and go to sleep! The trouble with you is that you’re geared too high!”

Fudge smiled patiently, sweetly, as if to say: “’Twas ever thus! Success is always a target for the shafts of Envy!”

At that moment, as if Fate sought to secure an even balance between joy and sorrow, Jim Grover, who had gone to the telephone a minute before,

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hung up the receiver and faced the others with gloomy countenance.

"Wouldn't that make you sick?" he demanded.
"Corwin won!"

There was an instant of silence. Then, "Who says so?" demanded McCoy incredulously.

"I called up Castle's. They got it by telephone from Corwin. Twelve to ten. What do you know about that?"

Grover kicked disgustedly at a bench.

A chorus of dismay arose. "Twelve to ten? How'd we make ten?" "Touchdown, goal and field-goal, of course." "Isn't that the limit? Say, they ought to let us play instead of the Varsity!" "We haven't won a game since Methuselah was in rompers!" "Wait till you hear them roast Lovering! Wow! I wouldn't be in his shoes for anything!" "Did they say anything about it, Jim?"

"No, they just heard the score, that's all. Gee, I wish Lovering would quit his kindergarten stuff and let us spring some plays! We never will win a game with the sort of things he gives us!"

"Well, that comes of putting a fellow who doesn't know football in as coach," declared Burns. "It's up to Lanny White, all right."

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"What's the good of knocking every time we get licked?" demanded Nostrand. "It doesn't do any good. Wait till you hear what the trouble was before you begin criticising."

"Everyone knows what the trouble is," responded McCoy gloomily. "Lovering doesn't care whether we win or lose. All he cares about is Springdale."

"Maybe he's right," replied Grover, reflectively and more cheerfully. "After all, if we win that game——"

"If we do!" said Thad Brimmer. "But how are we going to if we can't beat these smaller teams? Bet you anything you like that the Varsity would fall dead if it won a game!"

"That's all right," Fudge spoke up, "but you'll all be talking out of the other side of your mouth pretty soon. Dick knows just what he's doing, and don't you forget it!" And Fudge, looking unusually belligerent by reason of his inflamed nose, faced them indignantly. "What if we do get beaten by Corwin and Logan and all those little fellows? What we're after is to smear Springdale, and we'll do it, too, if we'll leave Dick Lovering alone and not kick him in the shins every time we get a

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chance! You make me weary, you gang of grouches!"

Fudge was a hero just now and his words were hearkened to with respect. An uncertain murmur of approval followed, and some laughter, and Grover said: "I guess that's so, fellows. Let's leave Lovering alone. Anyway, I'm going home. Who's coming along?"

And so, although the Scrub triumphed that day, the Varsity trailed home with a third defeat pinned to it, and the school was at first incredulous, then disgusted and, finally, resentful. Explanations and excuses didn't satisfy. A few fellows who had journeyed to Corwin and witnessed the game declared that hard luck and not poor work had been to blame for the defeat; that on merit Clearfield should have conquered by at least one score. The school at large listened but was unconvinced. "Beaten again!" it said. "Three games lost out of five played! What sort of a team have we got, anyway? What's Dick Lovering think he's doing? Playing 'give-away'?"

There had been extenuating circumstances, however, whether the fellows were willing to believe it or not. Clearfield had distinctly outplayed her opponent in three of the four periods, had gained

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more ground by rushing, had punted farther and had shown better generalship. In short, she had fairly deserved to win. But there is no denying that success is what counts, and she had not succeeded.

She had fought her way half the length of the field for a clean, well-earned touchdown in the second period and had kicked the goal. She had again rushed nearly sixty yards in the third quarter, and, being held for three downs, had sent a field-goal over for three more points. She had secured the ball two minutes later near the Corwin goal and almost scored again, a fumbled ball which every fellow on the eleven declared had been recovered by Tupper, being awarded to Corwin on the latter's four yards. And, in the final period, when, with the score 12 to 10 against her, she had twice attempted goals from the field, either of which would have given her a victory, Morris Brent had failed dismally to make good. Not once, declared Lanny resentfully, had the luck broken for Clearfield. All during the contest Fortune had glaringly befriended the adversary. Even Corwin's first touchdown could not be justly said to have been deserved, for the ball had been Clearfield's on her twelve yards,

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succeeding a punt by the opponent, and, after off-side penalties had twice been imposed on Clearfield when Corwin had equally offended, a blocked-kick had been downed by Corwin behind High School's line. But all this failed to impress the supporters of the team and by Monday feeling against Dick, or, perhaps, against what the school termed his system, was running high. One heard criticism everywhere, sometimes mildly sarcastic, more often angry and bitter. Some wag evolved a conundrum that circulated through school: "What's the matter with the football team?" "Too many Beatons!" Unfortunately for the perfect success of the conundrum, the question elicited so many explanations and theories that the answer, when it arrived, fell rather flat.

Just who started the agitation for a mass-meeting to protest against the conduct of football affairs never transpired. But the project met with instant acclaim and a notice suddenly appeared on the bulletin-board in the school corridor Monday noon. The meeting was to be held at eight o'clock Tuesday evening, announced the notice, in the assembly hall, and all students were requested to attend. The signature, "Committee of Twelve," produced much

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speculation, but no one could or would throw light on the identity of the twelve. Dick, attracted to the bulletin-board by the group in front of it, read the announcement on his way out of the building in the afternoon. The group faded away as he pushed forward, although several of its component parts halted at a distance to observe the effect on the coach. They had their labor for their pains, for Dick showed neither by attitude nor expression that the notice conveyed anything to him. He passed out with his usual half-smiling gravity, nodding to those he passed, and it was not until he was climbing into his blue runabout that the half-smile faded from his face and his expression became thoroughly serious.

At the field Lanny broached the subject laughingly. "Heard about the indignation meeting, Dick?" he asked at the dressing-room door. Dick nodded. "A lot of sore-heads," Lanny grumbled. "I've a good mind to take a bunch of the fellows and bust up the meeting!"

"Better let them alone," counseled Dick. "I don't much blame them for getting peeved. Still, if you're going—and there's no reason why you shouldn't—I'll run around and get you about half-past seven."

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"You mean that—that you're going?" asked Lanny in surprise.

"Yes, didn't you notice that the 'Committee' wanted everyone to come?" asked Dick, with a twinkle in his eye. "Yes, I shall go, and, if they'll let me, I'll have a few words to say."

"I wouldn't trouble to talk to them," expostulated Lanny. "Just let them spout and get it off their chests, Dick. It'll do them good."

"All they want," said Chester Cottrell, who had joined them, "is a chance to make some speeches and roast some one. Then they'll forget all about it, Dick."

"Maybe, but they're dissatisfied with the way I'm running things, Chester, and I don't want their antagonism toward me to spread to the team. There's nothing worse than for a school to go back on the team. Every player feels it and it takes the heart out of him. I don't say that they will do that, but they might, and if I can put things before them so they'll see, at least, that it isn't the team's fault that we're getting licked so often, I think I'd better. They're at liberty to roast me as much as they please. I guess any football coach expects a certain amount of that sort of thing, and he can't afford to

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be sensitive. Besides, I hope to show them in the end that I'm not as bad as they think!"

"All right, Dick," agreed Lanny, doubtfully, "go ahead and give 'em fits! We'll go and back you up."

"But don't go there in a bunch and sit together and try to—well, intimidate them," smiled Dick. "Free speech for all, Lanny! Let them say what they want to. After they've said it I'll try to satisfy them that there's nothing wrong with the team, no matter how punk the coach may be!"

"And I'll tell them, by George, that the coach is all right and knows what he's doing a heap better than they do, the silly galoots!" exclaimed Lanny indignantly.

"You sit tight and say nothing," replied Dick. "Let me do the explaining. All right now. Get your men out. We're ten minutes late."

CHAPTER XVI

LANNY VISITS THE OFFICE

PRACTICE was light that Monday afternoon, for many of the boys had suffered slight bruises or muscle-strains in the Corwin game and all were more or less languid as a result of the continued warm weather, while, to make easy work more advisable, the light drizzle which had been falling since early morning had made the field slippery. Several of the Varsity players were excused altogether, among them Tom Haley, who had stood a good deal of punishment, and Lanny White, who showed unmistakable signs of a disposition to go "fine." Everyone moved slowly, sluggishly to-day, and the jump that Chester Cottrell usually managed to put into the team was noticeably lacking. Morris Brent tried a few field-goals and did so well that it was difficult to believe that he had twice failed on

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Saturday. After practice was over, and it ended long before dusk to-day, Morris waited for Dick and Gordon, who emerged together from the dressing-room under the stand, and walked with them across to where the blue runabout, its top glistening with rain, stood in the lee of the fence.

"That stuff's come," he announced. "The fellow at the freight office called me up after school. I was afraid it wasn't going to get here in time."

"Are you going to move it to-night?" asked Dick.

"That's what I wanted to ask you about. Mr. Grayson's birthday is Wednesday and we've got to get the things in his office to-morrow evening. So it doesn't seem to me much use to move it twice. What do you think? Why not have Stuart load it on a team to-morrow afternoon before the freight shed closes and pull it to his stable and then bring it around to the school later, say about nine? The dickens of it is that we'll have to wait until that old meeting is over, I suppose. We don't want the whole school messing around while we're moving it in and getting the wrappings off. I wish they'd selected some other evening for their silly meeting."

"Yes, but you can wait until the fellows go home. I don't see any reason for moving it twice, either,

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Morris. Your scheme looks all right. Don't you think so, Gordie?"

"Yes. You'll want help to get the stuff unpacked, I suppose."

"I don't believe so. Louise and Nell are coming around, and Owen, the janitor, will be there to help. I can manage all right. Unless," he added, "you want to have a hand in it."

"I wouldn't be much use, I guess," replied Dick. "I won't come unless I'm needed. By the way, I've got some money for you at home. I've collected all but about three dollars."

"Me, too," said Gordon. "Only I've got more than three to get yet. Some of the younger fellows hate like anything to give up their money. Get in, Dick, and I'll turn her over."

"Coming along, Morris?" asked Dick, climbing in and laying his crutches in the improvised rack on the running-board. "You can sit on the floor if you don't mind."

"Get in the seat," said Gordon. "I'll squat. 'All set?'"

"All set," answered Dick. Gordon twirled the starting crank and Eli began to whir merrily. Gordon closed the gate behind the car and seated

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himself on the floor, and Eli chugged off down A Street toward Brentwood.

"By the way," announced Morris, "the girls are going around to the meeting to-morrow night, Dick. Louise is sputtering with indignation and declares that if it comes to a vote they'll see that you come out all right!"

"Votes for women!" laughed Dick. "That's very nice of them, but I'm afraid the fellows won't appreciate their presence."

"So I told her," said Morris, "but she says that all the students are asked to attend and that the girls are just as much students as the boys are. Anyway, she's going, and she's made about thirty others promise to go, too. I guess it's going to be quite an affair!"

"It looks so," replied Dick dryly. "Whoa, Eli! Good night, Morris. Let me know if I can do anything to help with the furniture, please."

As they started off again Gordon began to chuckle and Dick viewed him inquiringly. "Tell me about it," he said.

"Oh, it's nothing, Dick. I was just thinking."

"Does it always affect you like that?"

"Not always. Only when it's funny. You see,

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I was thinking about Louise going to the meeting. It's fine to have the ladies on your side, Dick."

"Huh!" grunted Dick.

"I suppose it's because you're such a handsome beast. Still, you've got a way with you, too. If it was anyone else, now, Louise——"

"Do you want to land in the gutter?" asked Dick carelessly.

"N-no, not especially, thanks."

"Then cut out the comedy."

"All right. But I can keep on thinking, can't I?"

"Yes, if you don't do it so I can hear you. Here's where you get out, anyway. Beat it!"

"Thank you. And good night, you old heart-breaker!"

The next morning when Lanny reached school he found a summons from the Principal awaiting him and sought the office with trepidation. He wasn't aware of having transgressed any rules and his class standing was no worse than it had been all the Fall. In fact, for the last fortnight he thought he had been doing considerably better. The office was on the main floor of the building, at the end of the long corridor. Mr. Grayson greeted the visitor pleasantly and asked him to be seated. "Just a

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moment, White, if you please," he added as he returned to some writing he was doing.

Mr. Grayson was short and square, with a head that seemed just a little too large for his body. His thick, wiry hair was sprinkled with gray, as was his short beard and closely-cropped mustache. From behind his glasses a pair of mild, thoughtful brown eyes looked gravely on the world from under heavy, grizzled brows. Mr. Grayson impressed one as being strong physically and mentally, and not only strong but capable. His countenance, in spite of its accustomed gravity—and the Principal was seldom seen to smile—was, on the whole, pleasant and kindly.

While Mr. Grayson continued his writing, Lanny looked about the office with a new interest. It did, he told himself, certainly need new furnishings. The carpet, always too small for the big room, was threadbare in places and so faded that it was difficult to guess its original color. The flat-top oak desk was stained and battered, and when, presently, the Principal leaned back in his swivel-chair it squeaked most excruciatingly. Mr. Grayson removed his glasses and, being nearsighted, squinted a little as he turned to Lanny.

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"Well, White, how are football affairs getting on?" he asked.

Lanny was so greatly relieved to find that he was not in for a caution regarding his class standing that for an instant he found it hard to focus his thoughts on the question. Finally, however, "Why, pretty well, sir," he answered vaguely.

"Hm!" Mr. Grayson thoughtfully polished the lenses of his glasses with a silk handkerchief which he carried for the purpose. "Mr. Carter talked to me over the 'phone last evening. He seemed to think that there was some dissatisfaction on the part of the school. He said his son had told him the boys were quite excited and were talking of appealing to the Athletic Committee to do something, I don't know just what."

Mr. Carter was one of the graduate members of the Committee and had a son in High School.

"Yes, sir, there is some talk," acknowledged Lanny. "There's to be a meeting to-night. The fellows don't like it that the team has been beaten so often. But I don't see what good it is going to do to stir up a lot of talk and trouble, Mr. Grayson."

"I see. Mr. Carter rather inferred that the boys held the coach to blame. Is that the way it is?"

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"Yes, I think so. They seem to have it in for the team and for Lovering too. We haven't made a very good showing so far, sir, and that's a fact, but Lovering's aiming at the Springdale game and doesn't care so much about the others. As far as I'm concerned, I'd like to win them all, but Dick seems to think we can't do that, and I'm willing to stand back of Dick, Mr. Grayson."

"Do you think he—well, knows his business, White?"

"Yes, sir, I do," replied Lanny decidedly. "He may be a little—a little too cautious, but I think if the fellows will let him alone he will bring the team around in good shape for the big game."

"I see. And the other members of the team, White? They think as you do about Lovering?"

"Yes, sir, as far as I know. We'd all like to have won more games than we have, but it isn't fair to put the blame on Dick, Mr. Grayson; anyway, not all of it. The team isn't as far advanced as it was a year ago at this time, but not having any coach at the beginning of the season made a difference."

"Hm. Last year Springdale won, I believe."

"Yes, sir. That's just it. We won all our early

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games but one and then got beaten badly by Springdale.”

“I see. Well, that’s all I wanted to know, White. I thought that it might be well to understand the sentiment of the team itself in case—well, in case the matter came before the Committee. I hope Lovering’s method will succeed. That’s all, then, thanks, White. Not very good weather for football, I take it.”

“No, sir, not very. Good morning, sir.”

Lanny retired from the interview well satisfied. If, as was not improbable, the meeting voted to appeal to the Athletic Committee, Mr. Grayson would, Lanny felt, use his influence against any interference with the coach’s conduct of affairs. That there would be any demand for a change of coach was not at all likely, for even the most dissatisfied would surely recognize the folly of, so to say, swapping horses in mid-stream. But the meeting might ask and the Committee might have consented to some policy of interference that would have worried Dick and seriously handicapped him. But with Mr. Grayson on their side, Lanny reflected, it was very unlikely that anything of the sort would occur.

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"They may talk their silly heads off now," he said to himself, "and much good it will do 'em!"

It stopped raining at noon and the field, though by no means in perfect condition, was better than the day before and practice went very well. Bruises and strains were forgotten, and a little cold breeze that made itself felt in the afternoon and sent the heavy clouds scurrying southward put more spirit into the fellows. The Varsity had little difficulty in scoring once in each of the three periods of the game against the Scrubs, and the fellows showed possibilities of attack that were distinctly encouraging. The handful of spectators who braved the weather and watched practice were, in many cases unwillingly, impressed with the work of the Varsity.

The mass-meeting had been called for eight o'clock, and long before that hour the assembly hall on the upper floor of the school building was well-filled. The advent of some thirty-odd girls occasioned amusement and surprise, even, I regret to say, some ridicule. But Louise Brent and her following paid no heed to the expressions of the latter. The girls found seats together at one side of the hall and calmly awaited events. Most of the

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football players were there, although, following Dick's instructions, they were careful not to group themselves. Dick arrived just before the meeting was called to order and his appearance created something of a sensation. He found an empty seat half-way from the front on a side aisle and lowered himself into it quite unembarrassedly. Some one started to clap, but the demonstration was quickly hushed. After that the hall was very quiet for several minutes. The clock over the platform announced eight-three. At last Sears, the President of the Senior Class, arose from his place near the front and faced the meeting.

"I have been asked," announced Sears, "in the absence of—of anyone as obliging, to explain the purpose of this meeting. First off, though, I want to say that I take no sides in this business. I'm neutral." Some laughter and applause greeted this. "As I understand it," he went on, "we are here to talk over the football situation and, possibly, take steps to improve it. Just now the first thing to do is, I presume, to appoint a chairman. Nominations are in order."

"I nominate Toby Sears," said some one.

"Second it!" called another voice.

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“You’ve heard the motion, fellows. Those in favor will say ‘Aye,’ opposed, ‘No.’ The ayes have it. It is a vote.” Sears left his place on the floor and ascended the platform, taking his seat behind the small table in the center. “Now, gentlemen, what is your pleasure?”

CHAPTER XVII

THE INDIGNATION MEETING

FOR a minute no one accepted the invitation, and chuckles of amusement came from the rear of the hall where the younger fellows were foregathered. Finally, "Go to it, Carter!" called one of the irrepressibles, and Ned Carter, a serious-visaged Junior arose slowly to his feet.

"Carter," said Sears in recognition.

"Mr. Chairman and fellows," began Carter, "a lot of us fellows aren't at all satisfied with the way things are going. I mean about football. Our team has played five games so far and it's been licked three times. We want to know what the reason is." Applause was instantaneous, and the speaker, encouraged, thrust his hands in his trousers pockets and went on with more assurance. "We started out all right, as you all know. We didn't have

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any trouble beating Highland Hall. Then we got a coach and—and things haven't gone so well. I haven't got anything against the coach personally. None of us have. We know him and we think he's a fine fellow. But it stands to reason that a fellow who has never played football and never coached a team before isn't the best sort of a fellow to coach for us. I'm not saying it's his fault that we've made such a poor showing so far, but I do think it's somebody's fault. A lot of us fellows——”

“You s-s-said that b-b-before,” called Fudge in a voice audible to most of the gathering, and a ripple of amusement started and was met by hisses and cries of “Shut up!” and “Put him out!” Carter proceeded doggedly.

“A lot of us fellows want to know whose fault it is. That's why this meeting was called. And what I say is, let's talk it over and find out what's best to be done and—and do it.”

Carter subsided amidst applause, some of it ironic, and the tall and lanky Bingham sought recognition. Bingham had a smirk on his face, and those who knew him best expected something particularly disagreeable from him. Nor were they disappointed

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"Carter," began Bingham, "says somebody is to blame for the way things have been going and that we ought to find out who it is. Seems to me it isn't very hard to find out. We've got as good a lot of players as we've ever had, I guess. You all saw what they did to Highland Hall, the first of the season, before there was any interference. The team was all right then. Then they went and got a coach, and what happened?" Bingham paused impressively.

"Tell us, little one, what did happen," pleaded a falsetto voice from the far side of the hall. Bingham frowned at the unseemly mirth which ensued at this witticism and hastened to forestall further interruptions.

"Since we have had our *coach*—" and his emphasis on the word was unpleasantly sarcastic—"we've played five games against weak teams and been beaten in three of them! I guess we ought to be thankful we haven't got *two* coaches. If we had we might have been beaten in all of them!" The effort at humor aroused a few uncertain chuckles. "I say it isn't hard to place the blame for the punk condition of our team, and it isn't, either. The fellows are all right. They do as they are told."

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The trouble is the fellow who tells them what to do doesn't know his business. He's had no experience. He never played a game of football in his life. He couldn't because——"

"Shame!" cried the girls, and some of the audience hissed. Sears rapped his knuckles smartly on the table.

"The meeting will come to order," he said severely. "And I must warn the speaker that personalities must be kept out of this discussion."

"Mr. Chairman, I am speaking of the football coach. If we can't discuss the coach what's the good of this meeting? Besides, I see that he is here in person to answer for himself. I suppose he thought that if he came we wouldn't dare criticize him. If he thought that he is dead wrong. We have a right to protest against his haphazard, ridiculous system of coaching and to demand that he either show results or yield his position to some one else, some one who at least knows the difference between a touchdown and a head-guard!"

"Nominate Bingham for coach!" shouted a small youth in the back of the hall and this time the laughter was spontaneous and prolonged, so prolonged, in spite of the chairman's stern demands for

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order, that Bingham, who evidently intended to say more, hesitated and finally sat down.

Several other speakers followed. One, a Senior named Lewis, spoke well and rationally. "I regret that previous speakers have seen fit to lay the blame for the state of affairs on Dick Lovering, our coach. He doesn't deserve it. Things don't seem to be going very well, and that's a fact, but I don't think there's anyone to blame for it. The trouble began when we lost Farrell. The team went on for some two weeks, I believe, without anyone in charge, and Captain White had everything to attend to, assisted, of course, by the manager. We all know that White tried his best to find a man to take Farrell's place, and that he couldn't do it. Then the Athletic Committee decided not to pay a salary this year, and that settled all chance of getting anyone with experience. As a last resort Captain White and some of the players went to Dick Lovering and asked him to coach the team. Lovering didn't ask for the place and didn't want it. He refused at first, I am told, and finally consented because White and the others wouldn't take No. Lovering has made no claims to be an experienced football coach. The fellows didn't think he was. But they had to

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have some one and Lovering was the only fellow in sight. If things haven't gone as well as they might have you can't lay any blame to Lovering. He may be partly accountable, but he isn't to blame. He's done the best he's known how. I'm certain of that. Perhaps he has made mistakes. I confess I don't know, for I'm no football authority. But I *am* sure he has done his level best and worked hard. Now the whole thing amounts to this. You're not satisfied with the progress the team has made. Probably the team itself isn't. Perhaps if methods of instruction or coaching or whatever you have a mind to call it, were altered things would go better. Lovering himself is here this evening. Before we go any further, why not hear from him? Perhaps he can satisfy us that things aren't as bad as they seem, that they're going to be a lot better and that when we run against Springdale next month we're going to lick her. If we do that we'll have done what we want most to do, and we'll forget all about what went before. I'd like to hear from Coach Lovering."

There followed much applause as Dick put his crutches under his arms, arose and faced the meeting. Then the hand-clapping subsided and an ex-

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pectant silence ensued. Dick looked sober but quite untroubled. He began to speak in a quiet voice plainly heard all over the hall and in crisp, business-like tones.

“Mr. Chairman, ladies and gentlemen,” began Dick, “I thank the last speaker for his expressions of good will. And I am very glad of this opportunity to say a few words. But if you expect me to make a defense of my methods you will be disappointed. Lewis outlined better than I could the events of this present football season. I was chosen, as he has told you, not because I had ever coached a team, not because I claimed that I could coach a team, but because there seemed no one else to fill the position. And I did hold off for awhile, not because I didn’t want to do it, for I did, and not because I thought I couldn’t do it, for I had a strong impression that I could. Lewis says that I must not be held to blame. I say that if there is any blame it’s mine. I’m ready to accept it and——”

Dick’s friends and not a few of the opposition applauded warmly.

“And I want to accept it. But especially I want you to believe that the team is not at fault. We’ve

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got a good team, a fine lot of players, willing, hard-working, cheerful. It's not the best team we've ever had. None of you will claim that. But it's more than an average good one. It's good enough to beat Springdale. I say that assuredly. If it doesn't beat Springdale the fault will be mine and not the players'. But I don't think it's going to be necessary to find fault with anyone, for I firmly believe we're going to win."

More applause then, heartier and less restricted to the element supporting the speaker. But with it came a challenge from across the hall: "Talk's cheap, Lovering! Show us something!" "That's right!" cried Carter. "Win a game and we'll believe it!"

"My one reason for speaking this evening," continued Dick, calmly; "is to tell you plainly, to thoroughly convince you that if we have lost three games out of five it is not the fault of the players. I don't say that we could have won all five games, but I am pretty sure that we could have won three of them. That we didn't was because I thought it unwise to push the team, as it would have had to be pushed, to a condition where it could have won. This, please understand, is not an apology, but mere-

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ly an explanation. Not only did I think that the team should not have been pushed then, but I still think it should not be pushed, and I shall not be in the least surprised if we are again defeated next Saturday."

A howl of protest greeted that announcement. Sears rapped hard for order. Dick smiled slightly and waited. When comparative silence fell once more he went on.

"When I accepted the honor of the position I hold—and it is an honor, and I appreciate it—it was with the distinct understanding that I was to have a free hand. So far I have had it. And I intend to have it, with all respect to you, as long as I am in charge. I am doing my best to turn out a team that will win from Springdale High School, and I tell you frankly that I don't care a button how many lickings we get meanwhile. Springdale has a strong team this year; it looks now as if she would be stronger than last year, when she had no trouble beating us. Some fellows might win all or nearly all of the early games and then win from Springdale with the material we have this Fall. But I tell you candidly that I am afraid to risk it. I am working for just one result and to obtain that

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result I am going about it in the manner I think best. And I firmly believe that my work should be judged by whether or not I obtain the result I am after. I have no wish to antagonize a single fellow, a single person, in this hall to-night, but I tell you quite frankly that I shall continue to go my own way as long as I am coach, that I shall not resign and that I shall resist to the utmost any attempt to oust me. I thank you for listening so patiently."

There was a moment of silence. Then applause broke out deafeningly. Hand-clapping, shouts, stamping made a pandemonium of the meeting. Sears helplessly banged on the table. Half a dozen fellows claimed recognition. But it was long before Sears could make himself heard. When he at last succeeded it was in recognition of Sprague McCoy.

"Mr. Chairman!" shouted McCoy, trying to be heard the length of the assembly hall above the din. "Mr. Chairman, I move you that a vote of confidence be given Coach Lovering, doggone it!"

Laughter, shouts of approval, cries of disapprobation followed. Carter, Bingham and half a dozen others sought for recognition. But Sears was strangely blind. Several fellows seconded the motion and Sears rapped and rapped for order.

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"Are you ready for the question?"

"All right!" "Yes, let her go!" "Shoot, Officer!"

"All in favor will say Aye! . . . Contrary . . . It is a vote! . . . Is there . . . further business . . . meeting?" Sears' voice was only heard at intervals. "If not . . . adjourn . . . in order."

"Move we adjourn!" shouted Guy Felker.

"Second it!"

"Moved and seconded that the meeting now adjourn," mumbled Sears. "All those . . ."

What followed was lost in the scraping of settees and the jumble of talk and laughter. The indignation meeting was at an end!

CHAPTER XVIII

MR. GRAYSON IS SURPRISED

DICK'S retirement from the hall took on the nature of an ovation. Many of the fellows pushed their way across to shake hands with him, to tell him "It was hot stuff, Dick!" to form a laughing, excited escort for him to the door. Louise Brent met him on the way out. "It was splendid!" she declared warmly. "I'm so glad, Dick!" Toby Sears, too, reached him before he had left the hall, and slapped him on the shoulder. "That was good plain talk, Dick, and we needed it," he said.

Dick went off in the runabout with George Cotner, while Gordon and Morris, waiting on the steps for the crowd to leave, reviewed events with much chuckling. "He did just the right thing," said Gordon. "If he had been apologetic and tried to

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explain things and made promises they'd have roasted him and probably voted to take the matter to the Committee."

"Surest thing you know," agreed Morris. "He took just the right line with 'em."

"You bet he did! He just—just edified them! And now he's got them eating out of his hand! It was a regular stampede!"

"I'll bet Carter and Bingham and some of those others are as mad as hornets," chuckled Morris. "It won't do them any good, though."

"Not a bit. Dick's got a big majority with him now. Bet you we could lose every other game except Springdale and not hear a yip out of any of them! Dick's a wonder, Morris. He always seems to know what to do, doesn't he?"

"He certainly does. He's what you call a born leader, Dick is. I wish this bunch would hurry up and go. It's almost a quarter past nine, and I told Stuart to get here at half-past. I hope he doesn't show up before the crowd gets away."

"Oh, they'll be gone in a minute. Where is Louise?"

"She and Nell have gone over to Miss Turner's to get the key to the office. They'll be back at half-

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past. I sort of wish they'd put that electric light out on the corner. If Mr. Grayson happened to go by and saw us unloading stuff——"

"He's not likely to, I guess. He lives at the other end of town. Hello, Jim. Oh, we're just communing with Nature. It sure was some meeting. Good night!"

The last of the audience left the building and presently quiet fell, broken finally by the sound of the janitor's steps on the stairs.

"That you, Owen?" called Morris. "The load's coming in about fifteen minutes. We'd better unpack the things inside, hadn't we? Can you leave a light here at the doorway?"

"Yes," was the reply. "I'll leave this one goin' and the one around the corner." The janitor, a sturdy young Irishman, came to the door and peered out. "Who's that with you, Mr. Brent?" he asked.

"Gordon Merrick. My sister and Miss Sawin are coming in a few minutes. I guess it will take all of us to move the desk in, eh?"

"A couple of us can manage it, sir. I've got my broom and dustpan here to clear up afterwards. There's some one coming now, ain't there?"

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"Those are the girls," said Gordon. "What time is it?"

"Nearly half-past," answered Morris, holding the face of his watch to the dim light from the hall. "He may be a few minutes late, I suppose."

"I think I hear a wagon now," said Gordon, as the girls joined them. But it proved to be a milkman's cart when it came into sight.

"Did you get it?" asked Morris.

"Yes." In proof, Louise held up the key. "I feel just like a conspirator," she added, "don't you? Have they all gone?"

"Yes, and it's a good thing we didn't tell that we were going to put the things in here to-night. If we had we'd have had half the school messing around."

"Most of them have forgotten about it, I guess," said Gordon. "Here he comes!"

Five minutes later the wagon with its mysteriously hidden load was backed to the steps and the driver and Owen, assisted by the two boys, were carrying the load inside. They worked quickly and silently, and in a very few minutes the wagon was empty and they were removing the wrappings from the articles. At this task all took a hand and the hall-

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way was soon littered with burlaps and excelsior and paper. Then, tiptoeing like the conspirators they felt themselves to be, they descended on the office. One of the lights was lighted and turned low, the shades were drawn and they began to move the old furniture out into the hall, from where, later, when the Principal had rescued his papers and books it was to be taken to the basement. When the carpet was up Owen applied the broom diligently. Then the refurnishing began. The new carpet, a deep-toned brown with a brown and blue border, made to fit the floor exactly from measurements taken by Miss Turner, was put in place and the big desk was set in the middle. As each piece was brought in Louise and Nell attacked it energetically with dust-clothes. The swivel-chair was put in front of the desk, the leather easy-chair—well, if it wasn't exactly real leather it looked just like it and the distinguished salesman had given his solemn word of honor that it would wear even better than leather—was set by the windows, the filing-cabinet was set against the wall, the straight-backed chair went by the door and the new wastebasket, for fear it would not be seen, was put beside the desk rather than under it. Then books, writing pad, ink-

MR. GRAYSON IS SURPRISED

well and such things were put in place and, finally, for just a minute, the light was turned on full that they might all see the transformation at its best.

"Doesn't everything look lovely!" breathed Nell rapturously.

"You'd never know it was the same room!" said Louise. "Isn't the desk beautiful, Gordon?"

"Peachy! Everything is. I'm crazy about the rug. It will be a real privilege now to get 'called in' by Mr. Grayson!"

"They're fine things, they are," declared Owen, admiringly, as he wiped off a speck of dust with the sleeve of his coat, "and it's proud he'll be in the mornin'!"

"An' there ain't a scratch on anyone of 'em," said the driver of the wagon. "I seen to that, boys."

"Er—yes," murmured Morris, directing an inquiring look at Louise. Louise nodded vehemently and a half-dollar changed hands. "Thank you kindly, sir," said the driver. "Is that all I can do for you?"

"That's all, thanks," replied Louise. "Please tell Mr. Stuart we are very much obliged to him for doing everything so nicely." The man took his departure and the others, although loath to do so,

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took a final look at the new splendor, turned out the light, locked the door and departed. Owen was presented with a crisp dollar bill before they left, however, and proceeded with his task of clearing up most cheerfully. Still elatedly discussing the success of the conspiracy, they made their way to Miss Turner's, nearby, left the key and started homeward along Troutman Street. But at G Street Morris called a halt.

"It's only a quarter to eleven," he said, "and Castle's is still open. What do you say if we walk over there and celebrate?"

"It's awfully late," murmured Louise doubtfully, "and I don't believe mama would like it."

But Nell Sawin declared that she didn't care whether folks liked it or not; she was going! "This is an occasion," she said, "and it simply demands a celebration. I'll go whether the rest do or not, Morris!"

"We'll all go," said Gordon. "Come along, Louise. There won't be anyone there at this time of night." So Louise consented and they struck across-town toward the Square.

"Look here," said Morris presently, "we ought to arrange some sort of a presentation, oughtn't we?"

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How's Mr. Grayson going to know where the things came from or who gave them? I wish we had thought to ask Dick or Sears or some one to be on hand and make a sort of speech."

"Couldn't you do it, Morris?" asked Nell.

"Me? Great Scott, no!"

"Then Gordon——"

"Nothing doing! Thank you just the same, Nell."

"I know," said Louise. "We'll write on a card that the gift is made by the students and we'll get Miss Turner to let us in there early in the morning and put it on the desk or somewhere where he will see it. Won't that do?"

"Yes," agreed Morris. "What time does he usually show up?"

"About a quarter of an hour before the bell," said Gordon. "There'll be plenty of time. You write it to-night, Louise, so you won't forget it."

"Very well. 'To Mr. Grayson, from the Students of the Clearfield High School, wishing him many happy returns of the day.' Would that do?"

"Slick," said Morris, as they entered the drug-store. "Now, then, what are you all going to have?"

There was a commendable promptness evident on the part of a large portion of the students the next

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morning. By eight o'clock the corridor was well filled. The girls were somewhat in the majority, for, as Gordon had surmised, many of the boys had quite forgotten that the gift to which they subscribed was to be presented to-day. Miss Turner arrived soon after eight and smilingly fitted the key to the office door. Louise slipped in and placed the card she had written on the front of the desk, propping it up with a stamp-box, while the others who had arrived early to enjoy Mr. Grayson's surprise crowded about the doorway and exclaimed at what they saw. All were not only delighted but quite astonished at the beauty of the furnishings. "I never supposed they'd be so lovely!" exclaimed one girl as she tiptoed to see over the shoulders of those in front of her. "Aren't they just beautiful, Miss Turner?" And Miss Turner, standing guard at the door, smilingly agreed.

"It's too bad," said Morris, "that we couldn't have got the old things out of the way. He will see them and know right off that something's up."

"But he won't know what," responded Toby Sears. "Besides, if this mob stays here he won't be able to see the old furniture. It's about time he came, isn't it?"

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It was, and to prove it a small freshman who had been detailed to watch for the Principal's approach from the entrance, came scuttling in with the news. "He's coming!" he shouted. "He's coming!"

Miss Turner quickly closed and locked the door and walked toward the entrance, whilst the others scuttled away from the office but lingered in the corridor, the girls doing a good deal of excited giggling and the boys trying their best to appear unconcerned. Then Mr. Grayson turned the corner and a sudden silence reigned. Since by that time nearly the entire student body was assembled, the silence was distinctly strange and uncanny, and Mr. Grayson evidently thought it so as, making his way through the crowd, he gravely bowed and returned the murmured greetings of the boys and girls. A puzzled look appeared on his face and he bent frowning glances right and left. Miss Turner intercepted him half-way along the corridor.

"Oh, Mr. Grayson," she said casually, "here's your key."

"Thank you, thank you. Ah—is there anything wrong, Miss Turner?"

"Wrong?" asked the teacher in surprised tones. "Why, no, sir."

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“Oh! I see! I thought—” He viewed the expectant faces about him rather bewilderedly. “Thank you, Miss Turner. Hm!”

He went on, the students crowding along the corridor behind him, and fitted the key to the lock. The throng hid the old furniture pushed against the wall beyond the door and he caught no glimpse of it. In fact, he scarcely looked that way, for he was oddly embarrassed and wanted nothing but to put his portal between him and the sea of strangely staring faces. He turned the key and the knob and quickly pushed the door open; and as quickly stepped inside. And then, as though he had collided with an invisible wall, he suddenly stood stock-still. There was an expectant hush, broken at length by a nervous giggle from some one of the girls. Those near the office door saw the Principal's head move as his eyes swept the room. Then, his hand still on the knob, he turned, plainly bewildered, as though he suspected himself of being out of his mind, and gazed helplessly and troubledly into the eager and excited faces of the watchers.

“I—I don't understand—” he faltered.

But realization came to him the next instant, for the students, no longer able to stand the suspense,

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broke into applause. A wave of sound swept the corridor; the clapping of hands, shouts, laughter mingled in a confused babel, through which came the piping cry of a small freshman:

“Happy birthday, sir!”

Mr. Grayson retreated before the outbreak, amazement, relief, embarrassment struggling for mastery. Uncertainly he laid his hat and gloves on the desk, and in the act caught sight of the card. He picked it up and read the inscription. It seemed to take him a long time. Perhaps he couldn't see very well, for he removed his glasses, drew the silk handkerchief from a pocket and began to rub the lenses furiously. Then, pausing in that, he took up the card once more and walked to the door and through it to the corridor, the throng giving way before him and the tumult increasing as those at the far end of the corridor caught sight of him. But gradually the noise ceased, and Mr. Grayson, clearing his throat nervously, began to speak.

“Young ladies and gentlemen,” he said haltingly, “I—this—” He stopped helplessly and shook his head. “I'm too surprised to—to say what I'd like to. I never guessed that—” He paused again, but what it was he had never guessed they all under-

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stood. "I thank you from the bottom of my heart. Not only for the—the wonderful gifts, but for the kindness, the—the dearness, if I may say it, of your action. It—it has affected me. That's why you must pardon me if I don't express myself better. I can't find the words just now. I'm—I'm in a daze, I think! Later, after I have had time to—to look at all the beautiful things in there and to properly appreciate what you have done I will try to thank you as I should. All I can say now is that"—a smile softened the grave lines of his face—"well, that you've made this the happiest birthday I've ever had!"

He bowed, tried to put his glasses in place again, failed, and literally fled into the office. And then the applause burst forth again, long and loud and continued, and Toby Sears called for "a regular cheer for Mr. Grayson, fellows, and make it good!" And it was good! And in the very middle of it the big gong clanged on the landing and, laughing and happy, the throng dispersed to the various rooms, more than one pair of eyes a little bit moist. Louise, frankly tearful, declared that she didn't care! It had been perfectly beautiful!

Later in the day, in assembly hall, Mr. Grayson

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thanked them again in a very nice speech, and even made them laugh a little when he described the awed condition in which he found himself amongst his marvelous new possessions, but his first expression of thanks down there in the crowded corridor had told them far more eloquently of his feelings. At recess those who had not viewed the new furnishings visited the office and Mr. Grayson held a sort of reception. The teachers, not to be entirely outdone, had brought gifts as well. There was a new dictionary, something very up-to-date and comprehensive and extraordinarily bulky, with a stand to hold it, and a big bunch of chrysanthemums on the desk. And Mr. Grayson, grave but plainly proud and delighted, exhibited each article of furniture to his callers, and dwelt on the finish and the grain of the wood and called attention to the coloring and texture of the carpet and was quite boyishly excited. Principal and pupils drew much closer together that twenty-fifth of October than they ever had been before. The girls declared that he was "a perfect dear" and the boys, less willing to express their real feelings, acknowledged one to another that "he wasn't a bad sort, Old Grayson!"

The mass-meeting and the birthday celebration

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seemed to clear the atmosphere wonderfully and an era of solidarity and good-feeling began at Clearfield High School that endured a long time. Simultaneously, Fortune smiled and two very satisfying events occurred. One was the decision of the Athletic Committee to devote the funds in hand to the immediate repair of the athletic field. No one ever knew for certain, but it was generally believed that Mr. Grayson brought this about. It was no secret that a meeting of the Committee was held on Thursday at his desire and that he himself made the motion and, in the discussion which followed, supported it strongly, much to the surprise of the student members. At all events, work on the fence began Monday morning and it was announced that a portion of the old stand would be demolished and replaced by a new steel-trussed structure in time for the Springdale game which was this year played in Clearfield. Later, when more money was available, another section would be erected. If this was Mr. Grayson's way of proving his gratitude it was well appreciated by the whole school.

The other event which brought satisfaction was the victory on Saturday of the Varsity Football

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Team over Benton School. As though to vindicate themselves and their coach, the team scored nineteen points against Benton and held that adversary helpless. Still using a mere handful of plays, none of them either novel or puzzling, Clearfield, by working together with a precision that promised fine things for the future, ripped the Benton line almost at will and presented a defense that anywhere inside the twenty-five-yard line was invulnerable. Morris Brent played through a full quarter and, although no field-goals were necessary, demonstrated his value to the backfield by excellent punting and good rushing. Clearfield went quite wild over that victory, for Benton had a big, well-trained and hard-fighting team, and had, only the week before, played Springdale to a standstill, neither side being able to score. Even the news that Springdale had overwhelmingly beaten Nickerson that afternoon failed to disturb Clearfield's satisfaction, although it did give Dick subject for thought. Nickerson was believed to be fairly strong and Springdale had, by reason of injuries to several of her best players, gone into the fray with a lineup largely substitute. Dick waited impatiently for the Monday morning Springdale paper, and when

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it came could find but slight encouragement in the account of the game it contained. There was no denying that this year's Springdale team was one to be respected. The conference that Monday evening lasted long.

CHAPTER XIX

ATTACK AND DEFENSE

YOU see," said Fudge, taking another bite of his banana and talking from the side of his mouth, "this fellow, 'Young Sleuth,' finds that when, when the old chap—Middleton, I mean, the millionaire that was found murdered——"

"I remember," replied Dick, opening a sandwich to examine the contents.

"Well, 'Young Sleuth' discovers that when Middleton was a young man, before he made all his money, he was a member of a band of Nihilists."

"Nihilists?" queried Dick doubtfully.

"Well, Socialists, I guess. Anyway, they used to meet in a cellar and plot. And it turns out that Middleton was stung with the job to kill a man. They'd draw lots, you know, and one time he drew the piece of paper that had the black dagger on it, and that meant that he was the goat."

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"I don't see the connection between a black dagger and a goat," demurred Dick gravely.

"Sure! The one who drew the paper with the black dagger on it had to do the deed. See? And Middleton drew it. The man he was to kill was a Governor of a State, you see. He'd been doing things these Socialists didn't like. So they decided to kill him."

"Quite simple," observed Dick. "Did Whathis-name do it?"

"No. That's the point. He started to, and once he almost did it, but something happened. Then he fell in love with the Governor's daughter and they got married and went to Europe to live because the Socialists were mad at him for not killing the Governor, and put a price on his head."

"How much?" asked Dick interestedly.

"I don't know," replied Fudge. "That's just a figure of speech. So he lived over in Europe for a long time till he thought the Socialists had forgotten their grouch and then came back to this country and made his fortune."

"How'd he do it?" inquired Dick.

"Oh, I don't know," said the narrator a trifle impatiently. "He was a Magnate. Anyhow, the So-

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cialists hadn't forgotten him at all, and every now and then they tried to kill him, do you see. Well, that's the clue 'Young Sleuth' discovers, and so he tracks the Socialists and goes to one of their meetings in disguise and they find he's a spy and he has a terrible time getting away from them with his life. I haven't got that far yet, though. I'm where he has just discovered about the Socialists. I've got eight chapters done."

"Fine," said Dick, folding his collapsible lunch-box. "How about the movie play, though? Done anything with that yet?"

"N-no, I thought I'd better finish the story first and then dramatize it afterwards. That's the way they generally do it. Maybe I won't make it into a play at all, though. I read the other day that they don't pay much for them. I guess I'll have it published in a book first, anyway, wouldn't you?"

"Yes," replied Dick a trifle absent-mindedly. "Look here, Fudge, you seem an inventive sort of chap. Why don't you get your brains to working for the team?"

"How do you mean, team?" asked Fudge inelegantly.

"I mean try your hand at inventing a couple of

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good plays for us, Fudge. Ever try that sort of thing?"

Fudge shook his head. "No. You mean trick plays?"

"Not exactly. Leave the 'tricks' out of them. Just a good play that will put the man with the ball where he can gain through the other fellow's line, or around it, Fudge. Imagine you're the quarterback and want a score like anything. Locate the opposing players and then scheme to get through them. You know your rules, don't you?"

"Y-yes, I guess so. Most of 'em, Dick. What—what kind of a play would you want?"

"A play that'll gain ground. Any kind of a play that we can use, Fudge. I don't know that you'll have any luck, but it occurred to me that if you could apply some of the ingenuity you display in writing these stories of yours to the problem of devising a play to use against Springdale you might hit on something."

"I don't mind trying it," said Fudge with growing interest. "You have to have a checker-board and checkers, don't you?"

"I don't believe those things are absolutely necessary," answered the coach, with a smile. "Take a

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block of paper and a pencil. After you've doped something out, study it hard. See if it's against the rules and whether it's calculated to deceive the enemy. Remember that the one big rule is to bunch your strength at the opponent's weakest point. No matter how you do it, that's the thing, Fudge. Start with that in mind and work from it. When you've got anything that looks good to you on paper bring it along and I'll see what it looks like to me. If it seems promising we'll try it out in practice. What do you say?"

"Sure! I don't mind. I'll do some to-night. That story can wait a while, I guess. Anyhow, it—it's getting sort of hard to write. I dare say it will go easier if I rest-off a bit. The trouble with these detective stories is that they're—they're complicated! Take this Socialist business, Dick. A fellow has to study up a lot, you know. That's one reason I thought of having them Nihilists instead. A Nihilist——"

"Why don't you call them Anarchists, Fudge?"

"Gee! That's it!" Fudge smote his knee delightedly. "That's what I had in mind all the time, but I couldn't think of the word! Anarchists! That's what they were! You don't have to study about

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them, either. Every fellow knows what they are. But Socialists——”

The gong announcing the termination of recess broke in on Fudge's remarks and the two got up from the coping and hurried back to school.

“Tell you what you do, Fudge,” said Dick, with a smile. “You make believe that the other team are the Anarchists and that this ‘Young Sleuth’ is the quarterback on your eleven. That'll lend a certain romantic interest to the thing, and I guess you have to have that to bring out your best efforts.”

“That's a good idea,” commended Fudge interestedly. “I'll bet you if ‘Young Sleuth’ had been a quarterback he'd have shown some slick work!”

It was the last day of October, and but two games remained on Clearfield's schedule before the final contest; that with Lesterville four days hence and one with Weston Academy a week later. The High School graduates had failed to get a team together and George Cotner had fortunately secured Weston for the date. Weston, the team which Lanny and Chester Cottrell had seen in action at Springdale, promised to give Clearfield just the sort of a battle needed in its final stage of preparation, one which, while not too strenuous, would thor-

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oughly test out its defensive strength against open plays. Weston, too, had been left without a game on the eleventh of November, and was very glad to accept Cotner's offer of the date.

Secret practice began the following day and Clearfield was set the task of learning a new formation and a number of plays from it. Dick now considered that the team was well enough versed in the fundamentals, although more than once in the ensuing two weeks of practice fellows were sent back to the dummy or drilled in other rudimentary branches when they showed signs of forgetting their a, b, c's. Dick had not yet attempted to develop the attack beyond what might be required of it from week to week. He had spent the first six weeks of the season in grounding the players in elementary football, in developing what he called the wits of the fellows—by which he meant the ability to think quickly in all sorts of situations and act accordingly—and in securing coherence. There had been a period when every fellow played for himself, a later period when the line and the backfield played as though they were in no way related, and now there had come a third stage of development in which the entire team of eleven men played together. Ab-

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solute perfection of team-play was still lacking, and Dick was satisfied that it should be, for he was convinced that no football team ever reached the top-notch of excellence and stayed there twenty-four hours. Dick believed that the team which attained the height of its season's form to-day began to go back to-morrow, and his biggest fear was that Clearfield High School would reach the zenith of development too early. His ambition, in short, was to trot the Purple on to the field on the eighteenth of November ready to play as it had not played all the Fall and as it could not play the day after. How nearly he would succeed in realizing that ambition remained to be seen.

While he had not yet paid much attention to offense, an offense had developed naturally on the groundwork he had prepared, an offense which, found wanting in several contests, had come into its own in the Benton game. With the defense, however, Dick had started early, since, when all is said, a good defense is harder to construct than a good attack. Consequently the team's offense was a full fortnight behind its defense, and offensively and defensively both it was far more backward than Springdale. Dick, though, was not worrying about

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that. It was his theory that Springdale had been developed too early and was likely to reach its top form at least a week before its principal game.

The new attack formation—now known as Formation B—was introduced to the Varsity on the Wednesday before the Lesterville contest. It was designed to conceal the play until the last possible moment and required only slight shifts of the backfield before the ball was snapped. A close line of seven players was used. The left halfback stood behind left guard and some two yards back, the right half in a corresponding position on the other side, the quarterback stood three yards directly behind center and the fullback stood three yards farther back of quarter. From this formation plunges at any position, and runs, forward passes, lateral passes and punts could be got off without enough shifting to appraise the opponent of the character or point of attack. The center usually passed direct to the runner. The feature that was most important in Dick's eyes, however, was that it not only concealed a punt but protected the punter. Fullback had only to drop back another step or two and quarter need only jump to the right out of the path of the ball to convert a rushing to a kicking formation. To

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add to the deception, these slight shifts need not be followed by a punt. A fullback run around either end or a forward pass might follow, or the ball at the last moment might be snapped to either of the other three backs. The formation had promised well on paper and by Thursday it had proved itself.

Dick's campaign was built around Morris Brent to a large degree. Dick did not believe that his team was sufficiently powerful in rushing ability to gain with certainty through the Springdale line inside the latter's twenty yards. Nor, while he looked for some success with forward and lateral passing, did he expect to be able to cross the opponent's goal line by that style of play. It was Morris's drop-kicking he was counting on inside the enemy's twenty-yard line, and there appeared to be no good reason why that accomplished young gentleman should disappoint him. Morris was now taking his regular amount of work and had been making seven and eight goals out of ten in practice and in scrimmage with the Scrubs. What might happen, though, if Morris went stale before the game or had an off-day on the eighteenth, Dick hated to think!

He did not flatter himself that his plan was a secret from the enemy, for Springdale well knew

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Morris's kicking powers and knew that he was as good as ever, in spite of his accident in the Summer. The only deception Dick could hope to indulge in was that of concealing his plays until the moment came to strike. Once inside the Springdale twenty-yard line, Clearfield would be expected to try for a field-goal unless, which was not at all likely, she found herself able to rush the ball over for a score. Springdale had twice sent scouts to watch her opponent play, a proceeding which had visibly annoyed George Cotner, who had never become reconciled to Dick's and Lanny's "no scouting" edict. However, it is doubtful if the Springdale spies discovered anything of use to their team. On one occasion they had seen Clearfield beaten by Corwin and on the other had watched the Purple capture the Benton contest by the use of the most elemental plays.

Springdale herself had come through a successful season, meeting with but one defeat and one tie. She was due for a hard game next Saturday, but, after that, like Clearfield, she was opposed to a team which was likely to afford her only a good stiff practice. One point there was on which Dick had finally satisfied himself. Springdale was with-

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out the services of a player who could be relied on to score by goals from the field. An excellent punter she did have; two, in fact; but a drop-kicker was not included in her assets. Springdale, in a word, was counting on a victory to be secured by all-around superiority of line and backfield and not by the individual efforts of any one star. Dick often wished that he, too, was able to pin his faith on a powerful attack that would win through the opponent's line. The trouble with depending on a single individual to win a share at least of the points was that if anything happened to the individual either before or during the game the fat was in the fire! Consequently, he watched after Morris like a mother hen protecting a lone chick, and sometimes ruefully told himself that he was unwisely banking too much for success on one boy's right leg! If anything happened to that leg——

But Dick refused to dwell on that contingency. He couldn't afford to and keep his wits about him!

On Saturday the Varsity, twenty-five strong, journeyed to Lesterville in a special pumpkin-hued trolley-car and engaged in the last hard game before the final test.

CHAPTER XX

MORRIS CALLS IN THE DOCTOR

NEARLY the entire school accompanied the team to Lesterville. The distance was short and the journey could be made inexpensively on the trolley line. Besides, football enthusiasm was by now rampant. The Benton victory had rekindled dampened patriotism and the yellow-sided cars which sped across country in the wake of the Varsity's special were filled to the limit with excited and noisy partisans. Lesterville was a manufacturing town and the Lesterville High School had an unfortunate but not undeserved reputation for roughness in its athletic contests. Dick, who had conducted the baseball team there in the summer, recalled the unpleasantness that had occurred on that occasion and hoped that to-day's meeting would pass without similar incident. He looked for a vic-

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tory, in spite of the fact that they had agreed not to have recourse to either the new formation or to any of the plays which had been designed for Springdale's special benefit. If they could win with the old plays—and both Dick and Lanny believed they could—well and good; otherwise there would be another defeat chalked up against Clearfield's record.

When Lesterville kicked off at the start of the game the Purple presented Merrick at left end, Partridge at left tackle, Cable at left guard, Haley at center, A. Beaton at right guard, Wayland at right tackle, Felker at right end, Cottrell at quarter, White at left half, Hansard at right half and N. Beaton at full. With the exception of the right halfback position, the line-up was the best Clearfield could put into the field, unless, having in mind Morris Brent's kicking ability, we give him the call over Nelson Beaton at fullback. Beaton, however, hit the line harder than Morris and was more clever in a broken field, and it was probable that in the Springdale game he would be used throughout the first half as long as Lanny and Cottrell made good with their punting or unless a field-goal became necessary.

Lesterville lined up a big, powerful-looking lot of players and it soon became evident to the visiting

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contingent that Clearfield would not find it an easy matter to gain through the line. Her first attempts ended disastrously and Chester Cottrell punted on third down. A big, rangey Lesterville back pulled the ball down and came charging back with it, eluding tacklers until he had raced over four white marks. Even then it required the combined services of Lanny and Hansard to stop him. Lesterville started at once on a series of plays on tackle that proved good for two and three-yard gains. The fullback, standing two paces behind center, took the ball direct and slammed at Partridge or Wayland and seemed always to find a hole on one side or the other. Lesterville marched down into Clearfield territory before the latter solved that attack, simple as it was. Then Cottrell closed his line and dropped his ends back and Lesterville found the going harder. Finally, transferring her attention to the center of the line, she was halted on the twenty-eight yards and forced to kick. A short punt across the field was captured by Cottrell, and that youth punted on first down from his five-yard line, the ball going to midfield. Lesterville got off a short forward pass that just failed of giving her her distance and followed it with a fierce attack on the center. A pen-

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alty for off-side set her back and, after another attempt at a forward pass, which grounded, she punted to Clearfield's twenty-three. There Hansard caught and, with good interference, ran back nearly to mid-field. With N. Beaton and Lanny alternating, Clearfield secured first down on plunges between guards, a fake-kick play fooling the opponent badly. Lesterville was set back five yards for holding. Cottrell, on a quarterback run, squirmed outside of tackle for four yards, Beaton plunged at right guard for two more and Lanny made the distance on a run outside left tackle. A second attempt at the same wing netted two, a plunge at center was thrown back and Cottrell passed forward to Merrick for seven. Beaton gained two through left guard. With the ball near her thirty yards, Lesterville tightened and after two attempts which gained but half the distance Clearfield punted across the line.

Merrick was off-side on the next scrimmage and Clearfield was set back. Lesterville worked a double pass and gained six around Merrick's end. On the fourth down, with half a yard to go, the Lesterville quarter fumbled and the ball went to the Purple. Lanny got away around left end for seven, Beaton made two through right guard and Lanny shot

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around right end for four. He was roughly tackled and Clearfield called for time while he got his breath back. The pigskin was now on Lesterville's fourteen yards and the Clearfield partisans were demanding a touchdown. A forward pass, Beaton to Felker, from kick formation, gained five yards, Felker being tackled on the side line and thrown out. Time was again called, the right end having had most of his breath knocked out of him. From the nine-yard line Lanny dashed around left end for a scant yard and placed the pigskin in front of goal. Morris Brent replaced Beaton at fullback. A fake kick, Hansard carrying the ball, gained two yards off left tackle, and on fourth down, with two to go, Haley snapped to Morris who lifted the ball over the cross-bar from the twenty-yard line. Clearfield 3; Lesterville 0. The quarter ended after the kick-off, the ball down on Clearfield's eighteen yards.

Dick took Morris Brent out and put Nelson Beaton back. Several of the Clearfield players showed signs of wear, but there were no serious injuries. The second period was all Lesterville's, for Clearfield lost the ball on a fumble by Hansard soon after the quarter started and the adversary recovered it on the Purple's fifteen-yard line. Lesterville in

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the stand and around the field shouted delightedly as the big fullback plunged straight through Haley for half the distance to goal. A second attempt at the center, however, gained less than a yard, and the Lesterville left half fell back as if to try a drop-kick. Clearfield, though, was not to be fooled and the quick plunge by right half at the left of the line was stopped for no gain. This time, on the fourth down, the ball really went back to the kicker, but the pass was low and the ball failed to go over the bar.

Clearfield failed to gain, with Lanny carrying the ball, around her left end and Cottrell punted. The ball went high and was caught on Clearfield's thirty-four yards. From there, by means of a forward pass which gained twelve yards straight across the middle of the line, and attacks between guards, Lesterville worked back to the Purple's twelve yards. A penalty for holding set her back fifteen. A forward pass failed and a double-pass behind the line netted four yards. Then a skin-tackle play got through for four more and a massed attack at center gave the enemy first down on Clearfield's eleven yards. Again, however, Clearfield dug her toes and repelled three attempts for a total loss of five yards, and once

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more Lesterville attempted a goal from the field, and once more a poor pass upset her calculations. This time the ball bounded back from a charging Clearfield lineman and the Lesterville quarter fell on it on the Purple's twenty-three yards. A fake-kick followed by a run around the left of her line brought Lesterville to the fifteen. A forward pass was tried, but Clearfield spoiled it. A plunge at Haley gained a yard and Lesterville sent her left half into kicking position. The pass was again too low and the line failed to hold and the left half hurled the ball across the field to an end. Gordon Merrick put the end out, however, and the pigskin grounded and went to Clearfield. The latter's attempts to circle the ends gained little, as did a plunge at the center, and Cottrell punted to the enemy's forty-five-yard line. The Lesterville quarter was downed for no gain. Lesterville plugged the line again and the half ended with the ball in her possession on the Purple's thirty-two yards.

Haley, Cable and Hansard had been pretty roughly used, the latter having sustained a strained ankle. Dick substituted Brimmer at center, Robey at left guard and McCoy at right half. Tupper was recovering from an injured knee sustained in prac-

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tice and Dick was loath to risk him. The third quarter began well for the visting team, for a fumble on her twenty-four yards lost Lesterville possession of the ball. Cottrell sent Lanny at left guard and gained three yards and then hurled the ball across to Merrick, who had got free. But the throw was too short and lost a down. A delayed pass to McCoy opened a hole at center and McCoy got through for four. Beaton went back as if to punt and Cottrell dashed straight ahead for the remaining distance. Beaton, however, was hurt, a Lesterville player having charged into him rather more roughly than the occasion demanded, and had to retire. Lanny drew the umpire's attention to the offense, but that official claimed not to have witnessed it. Morris Brent took Beaton's place.

With the ball on the home team's thirteen yards, Morris went back to kicking position and Cottrell skirted the left end for two yards, being downed near the side line. A criss-cross, with the ball going to McCoy, lost three, and again Morris went back. But once more the play was a fake; and Lanny got five yards past right tackle. On fourth down there was still four to go and Morris stationed himself on the twenty-yard line. Brimmer, however, passed

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miserably and the ball struck the ground a yard in front of the fullback. Morris got it on the bound but it was then too late to kick. Eluding one of the opposing ends who had almost reached him, Morris dashed away toward the left of his line. Lanny ran with him and put out one of the enemy. But Morris found no chance to turn in and was finally brought down on the ten-yard line by a terrific tackle that left him half-stunned. Time was called and Lanny again appealed to the officials. But neither umpire nor referee would allow that the tackle had been unfair. Morris, groaning with pain, pointed to his leg and Dick's heart sank. Quickly he was lifted up and carried off the field and Abbey, a third-string substitute, was put in his place.

Lesterville got her backs working finely and forced her opponent back into her own territory before the tide turned. Then a penalty for off-side and a signal that went wrong necessitated a punt and the ball again changed hands. But there was no further threatening of either goal and the quarter ended.

In the fourth period young Hull went in for Cottrell, Bryan took Merrick's place, Felker gave way to Toll and A. Beaton to Kent. With eight sub-

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stitutes in the line-up, things looked bright for Lesterville. But Lesterville, too, had been forced to make some changes, and the teams which battled through the final fifteen minutes proved, after all, very evenly matched. The new linemen gave good accounts of themselves and Perry Hull ran the eleven brilliantly. The playing, which had slowed down in the third quarter, was speeded up again and it was soon seen that Clearfield was getting the jump on her opponent. Hull mixed his plays well and at the end of five minutes Clearfield was once more knocking at the enemy's portal. But, although, she managed to get the pigskin to the eight yards, there was no one to try a field-goal and Hull's attempt at a forward pass over the line failed. Lesterville worked back to midfield, was held there and tried a forward pass which McCoy captured. Another slow but certain advance toward the Lesterville goal reached the twenty-yard line. There a fumble lost the Purple possession of the ball and Lesterville punted on second down. Hull caught and wormed his way past the enemy for fifteen yards. A forward pass gained twelve yards and first down. McCoy battered his way through for eight and Lanny gained the rest. The ball was back on the opponent's eighteen yards

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again and Clearfield cheered madly and shouted "Touchdown!" at the top of her lungs. But the Purple was playing against time now and there was but a scant two minutes left. Lanny struck the left of the line for a slight gain and got so roughly treated that time was called while he was taken out, remonstrating, and Tupper put in. Another attempt at the right of the line by McCoy gained three and then Tupper was given a chance to show what Morris's teaching had done for him. But although Brimmer managed to pass fairly well and the Purple line held like a wall, Tupper's drop-kick went two yards wide of the goal and Lesterville fell on it for a touch-back. Then, after one scrimmage, the whistle shrilled and the game was over, Clearfield the victor by one goal from the field.

Clearfield at large was well enough satisfied with that result, in spite of the fact that several of the players were suffering minor injuries which would keep them out of practice for several days. For it was realized that not only had Coach Lovering used many substitutes but that he had succeeded in winning without divulging a single new play, which, since rumor had it that Springdale scouts had been seen there that afternoon, was considered a fine bit

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of fortune. But Dick himself was far from satisfied with the way things had turned out, although he kept that dissatisfaction to himself. He and Morris Brent were both pretty uncommunicative on the trip back. They sat together, with George Cotner on Morris's other side, and, although Morris summoned a smile when fellows asked how he felt, an attentive study of his countenance might have revealed the fact that his cheerfulness was assumed and that all the way back to Clearfield he was suffering pain. And although when they changed cars at Town Square Morris managed to walk without much wincing it was seen that Dick and George Cotner helped him in and out of the cars. At the corner of E and Sawyer Streets they alighted, now, since the other fellows were no longer present, attempting no disguise of the effort it cost the injured boy to get from the car to the sidewalk. Dick hurried around up E Street to his house and was soon back with Eli. Into the run-about Morris was assisted, George Cotner drew back and Eli jogged slowly and carefully out Sawyer Street toward Brentwood. For a block or two the occupants of the car were silent. Then it was Morris who spoke:

“Of all the rotten luck!” he declared bitterly.

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Dick nodded. "It's tough," he agreed grimly. "I'm awfully sorry, Morris."

"The silly doctor told me it was just as good as the other one, too! A fat lot he knows about it! What do you suppose I've done to it, Dick?"

Dick shook his head helplessly. "I don't know, Morris. I couldn't find anything like a break. Maybe it's just a wrench, after all."

"Gee, I hope so!" muttered the other. "I don't see how it happened, anyway, do you? He tackled me all right, didn't he?"

"He tackled below your knees," answered Dick grimly. "I could see that, even if the umpire couldn't. I suppose when you went down you twisted the leg somehow. Well, it's done now. I'm sorry for you, Morris, and I'm sorry for the team. It leaves us in a hole, all right. We've been counting on you all Fall, you see, and we've built our game around you. I don't suppose Tupper——"

"He's not much good," Morris growled. "He doesn't seem to get any swing at the ball. Hang it all, Dick, I've got to play! That's all there is about it! If that fool doctor says I can't I—I'll tell him to forget it!"

"I'm afraid your folks won't forget it, though,"

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replied Dick dryly. "There's just one thing to do, Morris."

"What's that?" asked Morris, groaning as the car went over a jounce.

"Keep it quiet," answered Dick. "None of the fellows know that you're badly hurt—if you are, of course—and it mustn't get around. Springdale must think we've still got you to kick field-goals. We can fake along somehow, Morris. The doctor will let you come out in togs and sit on the bench, anyway, I guess, and maybe you can trot about a bit."

"Don't see what good that'll do if I can't play," objected the other dejectedly.

"It'll do some good, Morris. We'll have to change our plans for the Springdale game, but we needn't let Springdale know we've changed them. See?"

"Oh!" muttered Morris thoughtfully.

"Now, when you get home you telephone for the doctor at once and get his verdict. But swear him to secrecy, Morris, and swear everyone of your folks to secrecy too. Then call me up and tell me what he says. No, don't say anything over the 'phone but 'yes' or 'no.' If you say 'no' I'll know you can't play. But don't let a soul hear about it. If you can hobble out on Monday I'll come for you in the car.

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I want the paper to report you at practice. I want Springdale to keep right on thinking that we're banking on you for field-goals, Morris. I'm not going to lie about it, but I'm certainly not going to put anyone wise. See what I mean?"

"Yes, I see what you mean, all right. But—but, hang it, Dick, it doesn't do me any good!"

"It'll do you a lot of good if you see us win from Springdale instead of lose to her two weeks from to-day," replied Dick. "It's the one way, I guess, in which you can help us to win now, Morris. Remember that."

"All right, Dick. Anyway, maybe it won't be as bad as we think. Maybe if I keep out of it a few days I'll be all right."

"We'll see," said the other. "Now I'll give you an arm into the house. Stay where you are till I get out." Dick looked cautiously about and was relieved to find the street deserted. "All right now. Put your arm over my shoulders. That's the ticket! Hurt much?"

"Not—not much," answered Morris from between clenched teeth.

Three-quarters of an hour later Dick left the supper table to answer the telephone.

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“That you, Dick?” asked a voice at the other end of the wire.

“Yes,” answered Dick.

“This is Morris.”

“Yes.”

“He says——”

“Never mind that! Careful, Morris! Is it ‘yes’ or ‘no’?”

There was a fateful pause. Then:

“‘No,’” growled the voice.

CHAPTER XXI

THE NEW PLAYS ARE TRIED

THE football council, or board of strategy, as George Cotner liked to call it, met at Dick's house Sunday night. Gordon, who had dropped around to call, was included. Lanny, Chester Cottrell and Cotner were the other members. None save Dick knew of Morris's injury until Dick made it known. Then consternation indeed did reign.

"Do you mean," demanded Lanny, "that he won't be able to play at all against Springdale?"

"The doctor forbids it. The leg isn't broken anywhere, but it's had a bad wrench and Morris says he simply laughed at him when he asked if it would be well enough by the eighteenth for him to play. He's on his back to-day and must stay there until Tuesday at least. I went around there this afternoon.

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Morris isn't—" Dick smiled slightly—"isn't awfully cheerful company just now!"

"But—but that puts us in a beast of a hole!" exclaimed Lanny. "Can Tupper kick a goal if he has a chance?"

"The best Tupper has done is something like four out of ten tries from around the twenty-yard line and at almost no angle. I think by next year George will be a fairly good drop-kicker, but there isn't much hope for this year. Of course, we'll keep him at it and make him do the best he can, but there's no use counting on him much in the Springdale game, fellows."

Lanny laughed mirthlessly. "Pleasant news, isn't it?" he asked of the assemblage. "It might save us trouble to forfeit the game."

"We're not beaten yet," responded Dick. "Besides you chaps and me and the doctor, no one knows of this; excepting Morris's folks, of course, and they, as well as the doctor, have been sworn to secrecy. Now I want you fellows to agree not to breathe a word of it to anyone; not to even talk of it amongst yourselves."

They each nodded, looking, however, rather mystified.

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"There's just one thing left to do," continued Dick. "We've got to change the campaign. We've planned around Morris's drop-kicking and place-kicking; we've got to plan now on a rushing game. But Springdale knows that we've got Morris Brent to put the ball over for us from anywhere inside the twenty yards, and Springdale doesn't look for us to try to rush it over if the going's tough. Once inside her twenty she will expect a try-at-goal. Our one hope lies in allowing her to continue thinking that. That's why this has got to be kept quiet, fellows. If she gets news of it she'll know too much. Just as soon as Morris is able to get out he will put togs on and report every afternoon. Since practice is secret no one will know that he isn't playing. I shall tell every member of both teams to-morrow that anyone giving out a particle of news will be dropped at once. In the Weston game I'll have Morris show himself on the field. The same any time we hold open practice. No one need know of this except ourselves."

"But if we don't use him in the Springdale game won't they guess?" asked Gordon.

"They'll worry," replied Dick calmly. "I wouldn't be surprised if Morris sitting in plain sight on the bench was as much use to us as though he

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played. For that matter, if the right conditions arrive I mean to put him in."

"In spite of the doctor?" gasped Chester.

"No, I'll get the doctor's permission for Morris to go in *if he doesn't play!*"

"If he doesn't play? Then what—" Lanny, pausing, viewed Dick with dawning comprehension. Then he grunted. "I see. There might be something in that at a pinch."

"And I'm afraid the pinch is going to come," said Dick grimly.

"I don't see," began Cotner.

"I'm not ready to explain just yet," Dick interrupted. "I'll have to work it out. Later I'll have something to suggest. Morris is still an asset, even if he can't play, and we've got to find a way to use him. Now, then, let's see if we can plan out a game that will win without any field-goals. My conviction is that near Springdale's goal we won't be able to smash that line of theirs much. So we've got to find a way of getting around it or a way of opening it up. Here are some plays I've been working on. I want to see what you think of them." Dick took up a half-dozen sheets of paper. "These are all from B formation. I think we will



“ ‘ Here are some plays I’ve been working on.’ ”

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stick to that formation on attack right through, fellows. I don't believe that anything is to be gained by using the other at times. Formation A won't allow any play that B won't, and the fewer things we have to remember, the better. Now, here's a forward pass from kick formation. Beaton falls back to punting distance, you hold your place, Lanny, Chester jumps to the right out of the way of the pass and Tupper holds his place too. You and Tupper and Chester are in position to protect the kicker and so far there's nothing to give it away. The ends go down as if under the punt, right end wheeling toward the center after getting by and left keeping out toward the side line. The ball is passed to Beaton and he fakes a kick and then runs, not too fast, to the right about ten paces and throws to right end, if he is uncovered. If not, then to Tupper, who, after blocking and letting his man by on the inside, runs straight out to the right. You, Chester, protect the throw from here, just in front of Beaton. We've got to get the time right in this play. About ten counts should see everyone set for the throw; perhaps eight; we'll have to work that out in practice. The same play can be used on the weak side. In that case Beaton would run to the left, you following

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him, Chester, and Lanny running out to the side to take the throw in case left end isn't uncovered. I'm going to number this 8 on the right and 9 on the left. What do you think of it?"

There were some criticisms, Lanny pointing out that there might be danger from the enemy's right wing coming through. This was discussed and finally the play was set aside for trial. Dick next presented a delayed pass from kick formation with left end coming around and taking the ball from quarter. This promised a good variation of an old play and Chester was enthusiastic over it. Three other plays followed: a delayed pass with fullback taking the ball for a plunge at center, a rather complicated lateral pass in which the entire backfield participated, and a simple tackle-around play with an end participating. All were decided to be worth trying out against the Scrubs. Finally Saturday's game came up for discussion and criticism, and, after that had been thoroughly threshed out, the subject of injuries was brought up. Only Nelson Beaton had suffered more than superficially. He was pretty well bruised, Lanny reported. It was decided to excuse all players who had gone through three periods on Saturday from to-morrow's practice. It

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was almost eleven o'clock when the conference broke up, and after the others had gone Dick remained until nearly midnight at the parlor table. Once he took up a blue-book, fourteen of whose thirty-two pages were decorated with weird plans from the brain of Fudge Shaw, and examined the contents attentively. But in the end he laid it down with a sigh. Fudge's plays were all old, true and tried. He had utterly failed to show any of that ingenuity which he lavished on his stories, Dick reflected. After that he took up his own plays and studied them frowningly, seeking to discover the weak points in each. Later still, he put his hands behind his head, leaned back in his chair and gazed tiredly and discouragedly at the green-shaded lamp. In spite of his hopeful attitude before the others, he was in reality pretty low in spirits to-night. It was, he told himself ruefully, all very well to talk glibly of changing the plan of battle at the eleventh hour, but would any new plan work out? As matters stood now Springdale possessed a stronger and much heavier line, an equally fast and slightly heavier backfield and an equally good punting department. She was trained by an experienced coach who had been with the team for several years and who had

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previously shown himself remarkably clever at devising new plays for his men. On the whole, Clearfield's outlook was rather depressing to-night, and Clearfield's coach, when, finally, he put out the lamp, locked up the house and went to bed, was far from hopeful.

But morning always brings new courage, and Monday morning made no exception in Dick's case. The sun shone radiantly, there was a pleasant crispness in the breeze which blew through his window and things looked a heap better to him, although, actually, conditions had not changed a bit since midnight! At breakfast he neglected his eggs while he searched anxiously through the Springdale paper for its account of the Clearfield and Lesterville game. And when he had read it he sighed his satisfaction. Not a word was said about Morris's injury. That incident had gone unnoticed, or so it appeared.

Lesterville, Nov. 4: [he read] Clearfield High School won an interesting and closely contested game from the home team here this afternoon, 3—0. The visitors showed more team-play and were better able to gain outside of tackles. Neither team had enough punch to put the ball over the line, Clearfield making the only score by a field-goal in the first period, Brent kicking

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from the twenty-yard line. Nothing new in plays was shown by either team. For Lesterville, Norris, fullback, played a fine game and Purdy, at quarter, ran the team well. Lesterville's line was slow and the opponent owed many of her gains to the fact. For Clearfield, Captain White played his usually brilliant game and was well assisted by Hansard and N. Beaton, and, later, by Brent, who went in for Beaton. Many substitutes were used on both sides.

The local paper, which gave nearly a half column to the event, mentioned the injury to Morris, but gave no hint of its seriousness. Dick was well satisfied and returned to his breakfast with a good appetite.

Morris's absence from school that day went unnoticed. On Tuesday he appeared, a little gloomy, but showing no sign of anything wrong save a slight limp when off his guard. All that week he reported at practice and no one outside of the field guessed that he spent the time sitting disconsolately on the bench, wrapped in a blanket, or in coaching Tupper and Nelson Beaton at kicking goals! On Friday the public was admitted to the enclosure, but there was no scrimmage by the Varsity and the fact that Morris didn't even participate in signal work or give an

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exhibition of his booting ability caused no comment, since it had been understood all the Fall that Morris was being taken care of and given only enough work to keep him in condition. On Saturday, when Weston faced Clearfield, there was no good reason for kicking field-goals since the Purple found no trouble in doing pretty much as she pleased with her opponent, and so again Morris's absence occasioned no surprise. He was much in evidence along the side lines, dressed for play, and if he wasn't used it was plainly because Coach Lovering chose to score by rushing rather than by the aërial route.

Cotner assured himself that no Springdale scouts had gained admission to the field that day and passed the news to Dick. Consequently, in the third and fourth periods, the team tried out some of the new plays on Weston and saw with much satisfaction that they puzzled the adversary and gained ground. Although a light team, Weston was quick to size-up plays, and that the new ones succeeded against her argued particularly well for them. Dick put in what was practically an entirely substitute line-up in the fourth quarter and the subs gave an excellent account of themselves. When the final whistle blew the score was Clearfield 26, Weston 0. There still re-

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mained much to be accomplished in the remaining four days of practice before the Springdale contest, but, on the whole, Dick was satisfied with the work of his charges. The attack was not yet as smooth as he wanted it, but on the defense the team had shown up finely, and against a team which, if not powerful, was more than ordinarily versatile and resourceful. Dick's defense against forward passes worked well, and Gordon Merrick at left end and Felker at right covered themselves with glory. Clearfield's own attempts at forward passing were not very successful, but Weston had been coached to guard against such plays and was consequently hard to deceive. The Number 8 Play did, however, catch her napping on two occasions. The school at large went away highly pleased with the showing of their team and predicting rout and disaster for Springdale the following Saturday.

Springdale, too, overwhelmed a weak opponent that afternoon, as Dick learned by stopping at the Square on his way home with Gordon in Eli. In fact, Springdale had scored seven more points than had Clearfield. But, since it was a question whether Springdale's adversary was not an even weaker team than Weston, Dick refused to be troubled.

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On Sunday Fudge called for his blue-book and was at first plainly disappointed at Dick's verdict. When, however, Dick had explained that what the team wanted was a play that was deceptive rather than merely involved Fudge took heart again. Fudge was a born optimist, anyway, and it took more than one disappointment to discourage him.

"I g-g-get you now, Dick," he said, pocketing his blank-book. "You l-l-leave it to m-m-me! I thought of a dandy play this morning in church, but I've got to work it out. I'll show it to you to-morrow. Talk about deceptiveness! Gee, this is a c-c-corker."

"That's fine," said Dick, with a smile for Fudge's confidence. "What's it like?"

But Fudge refused to divulge any information regarding it, taking himself off with renewed requests for Dick to leave it to him! Which Dick, having lost faith in Fudge's ability as a football tactician, was perfectly willing to do.

Tuesday morning the Clearfield paper made a startling assertion. "In practice yesterday," it said, "Morris Brent, High School's phenomenal goal-kicker, made what is probably a record hereabouts. Brent put over seventeen goals from twenty tries, most of them from difficult angles. If more than

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half of Clearfield's total against Springdale is not made by this player's clever right foot we lose our guess."

"Now where in the name of common sense," gasped Dick, "did they get that tale?" Lanny, when Dick repeated the question to him, laughed.

"That's some of Chester's nonsense," he said. "Billings—he does the High School news for the paper, you know—met Chester after practice yesterday and tried to work him for news. Chester told him he wasn't allowed to say anything of what went on at practice. 'But,' says Chester, 'you're a fellow who's see a lot of football, Billings, and I want to ask you one thing. Did you ever know of any drop-kicker putting over seventeen out of twenty, and from hard angles?' Of course Billings said he hadn't and wanted to know all about it. But Chester wouldn't talk, begged Billings not to use what he had told him, or, if he must use it, not to tell where he'd got it, and then beat it. So that's how that happened."

Dick smiled and frowned. Finally he laughed. "Well, that's what I'd call a near-lie, Lanny. Still, it is funny! And it won't do us any harm, either. I hope the Springdale paper copies it."

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It did, the next morning. It not only copied it but it enlarged on it and declared that five of the successful attempts had been made from the forty-yard line! Chester was vastly amused over the success of what he termed his diplomacy, but Morris, oddly enough, was as mad as a hatter about it.

"It makes me look like a fool," he declared. "Anyone knows you couldn't drop five goals over from the forty in twenty tries! Who started that yarn?"

He wasn't told, however. As Lanny said, they'd need Chester's services next Saturday, and he would be of far more use whole than in pieces!

CHAPTER XXII

CHEERS, SONGS AND SPEECHES

THAT Tuesday afternoon practice was the hardest of the season. For four twelve-minute periods, the Scrubs, driven to desperation by Dick's reiterated assertion that this was their last chance to show what they could really do, eternally prodded by Captain Nostrand and taunted until they were fighting mad by Quarterback Farrar, drove at the Varsity as if their future salvation depended on the utter demolition of the adversary! Nostrand thumped them on the backs, even kicked them none too gently when they crouched too high on defense, shouted threats and pleas until his voice cracked. Pete Farrar shrilly called them names: "bone-heads," "quitters," "babies," "pups," and dared them to show one tiny scrap of intelligence, of fight! And Dick, hobbling from one side to the other, scolding, in-

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structing, praising sometimes, egged the opponents on. Even George Cotner, umpiring, took a hand in—or, rather, lent a voice to—the vocal confusion.

But the Varsity stood firm on defense and was irresistible on attack, and the Scrubs, yielding grudgingly, were forced back and back toward their goal time and again. But how they did fight that day! One would have thought that the two teams were the bitterest enemies to have watched them “mix it up!” Fudge played himself out by the end of the third period and had to yield to a substitute, as did others before time was finally called. The Varsity scored twice in the second quarter, once in the third and again in the fourth when a fumble gave them the ball on the opponent’s twelve yards and Lanny in three tries shot across for another six points. Twice the Scrub got to the Varsity’s five-yard line and twice she failed to score. Field-goals were barred to both teams and it was rush, pass or nothing, and the Scrubs piled themselves up against a defense that was like a concrete foundation. Later, just before the game ended, the Varsity, by two well-managed forward passes, took the pigskin to the Scrub’s twelve yards. Less than a minute of time remained and, after an ineffectual attack at right

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guard by Nelson Beaton, Hull, who had taken Chester Cottrell's place, called "39—69—408!" He jumped a step to the right. Beaton went back to kicking distance. Again the signal "39—69—408——"

Back sped the ball to the fullback. The lines heaved and swayed. Off dodged the ends, right and left. Beaton trotted to the right, poised the ball. Right half hurled himself against an obtrusive tackle, recovered and sped toward the side line. Then the line broke, the Scrubs came piling through, leaping, panting, arms upstretched. Hull went down under the onset. But Beaton, his gaze on an up-thrust hand near the goal line, dodged a Scrub forward and hurled the ball straight and true above the mêlée. Too late the Scrub backs saw the trick. The pigskin flew into right end's arms and that youth romped across the last white mark and sank to his knees between the posts! Number 8 had worked once more!

Dick led Fudge aside later in the dressing-room. "I got that play, Fudge," he said. "Sorry I wasn't in when you came."

"What do you think of it?" demanded Fudge exultantly. "Isn't it a peach, Dick?"

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Dick smiled. "I think so," he replied. "I'll try it out to-morrow. It isn't a play that we could use more than once in a game, Fudge, for its merit lies in its power to surprise the other chap, and he wouldn't fall for it more than once, I guess."

"I don't see why," Fudge objected.

"Think a minute," answered Dick gently. "The quarter kneels to hold the ball and then runs with it. The opponent might think once that it was a bona-fide placement-kick, Fudge, but the next time he would be on the lookout. And instead of getting sucked in he'd watch the quarter and his backs would go through outside of tackle and smear the pass. But never mind that. It looks promising for a one-time play and, I believe, it's going to be just what we will want on Saturday. I only wish you'd thought of it before, Fudge."

"So do I. But, say, I've got another one——"

"Save it for next season," laughed Dick. "There's no time to teach more plays now. What's the matter with your ear?"

"Some idiot kicked it, I guess." Fudge felt of it cautiously and winced.

"Better bathe it. It's pretty well swollen. Well, thanks for the play, Fudge."

CHEERS, SONGS AND SPEECHES

There was a mass-meeting in assembly hall that evening and the fellows sang and cheered enthusiastically until, at nine, Lanny and Dick appeared and mounted the platform. Lanny spoke first. He had a simple, direct way of talking that pleased his hearers, and to-night, although he said nothing very new, he managed to work the meeting into a fine frenzy. Cheers followed, repeated over and over, and then Dick arose and faced a new tumult. He couldn't help but contrast this greeting with that which had met him at that former meeting, and the thought brought a smile to his face. When the cheers had subsided he spoke :

“Fellows, there isn't much anyone can say on the eve of a big game; and, anyhow, Captain White has got ahead of me. I do want to thank you personally, though, just as White thanked you on behalf of the team, for the splendid support you have given us all season.” A few chuckles were heard. “I want to thank you too for your—for the good feeling you've shown me. I appreciate it. And I want to tell you that it has made a difference; helped more than you can possibly realize. I don't want to seem to be asking for credit for whatever share I've had in the development of the team, but I do want to say

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to you that when I undertook this job I didn't appreciate what it meant. It's been—well, it's been hard work, fellows; harder work than I expected. And there have been lots of discouraging moments. And that's why I say that you've helped me, just as you've helped us all, by letting me know, as you have let me know, that you had confidence in me in spite of my—my limitations."

"Now, fellows, your part—your share in this isn't done yet. It won't be done until the final horn squawks Saturday afternoon. You can do a lot from now on, quite as much as you've done already. I want you not only to believe thoroughly that we're going to win, but I want you to make the team understand that you believe it, and I want you—I ask you particularly to make Springdale know that you believe it. There's a lot of talk nowadays about psychology—whatever that is—and some of it's probably poppycock. But I firmly believe that there's such a thing as so impressing the adversary with your confidence that he will be affected by it. It isn't just a theory, either; I've seen it work out more than once!"

"I suppose you'd like me to tell you what I really think about our chances to win on Saturday. Well,

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I'm going to tell you even at the risk of making the team overconfident, which is something it can't afford to be. I think we're going to win, and win decisively!" Dick had to wait for the applause to subside then. "I don't mean by that that we'll pile up a big score, for I think the teams will be too evenly matched to score many times. But I do mean that when the battle is over there won't be any doubt as to which is the better team. I'm not belittling the enemy. Springdale has a fine team, a team at least twenty-five per cent better than she had last year. You have only to study the results of the games she has played this season to realize that. But, on the other hand, we've got a fine team, too. Along——"

More cheering then, wild and continued.

"Along in the middle of the season I told you that our team was no more than an averagely good one, I think. It wasn't—then. Now it is. It's as good a team as ever represented the School, and that's saying not a little when you recall some of the teams, which, although not very lately, have defeated Springdale by overwhelming scores. But good as it is, it's got to play hard, play for all it's worth, play like—like thunder! The Springdale line is a strong one. Few teams have made much impression on it

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this Fall. The Springdale backs are a fast and clever lot and have scoring power. The team has been finely coached and knows a lot of football. They have good punters over there, too; no better than ours, I think, but not to be despised. There's one thing they haven't got, fellows, and that's a man to kick field-goals!"

Cheers and shouts of "Brent! Brent! A-ay, Brent!" broke into the discourse, and Morris, sitting in the front row, studied his scarred hands attentively and hid the look in his eyes.

"I want to prophesy, fellows," continued Dick, "that if we get the ball inside the Springdale fifteen-yard line we'll score!"

"I'm not saying how we'll score," he added with a smile when he could go on, "but we'll score!"

Cheers and laughter mingled, and some one increased the latter by shouting: "Every little three-spot counts, old man!"

"I guess that's all I have to say," ended Dick. "You've got the team. All you've got to do is to be back of it every minute and let the other fellow see that you're back of it. Don't get the glooms if they score first. Keep on cheering. The game isn't over till it's won!"

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The meeting gave itself over to riot for several minutes. Then the singing began again and finally, hoarse, jubilant, excited, the fellows made their way out of the hall and down the stairs to form in a procession outside the building and march cheering and singing through the quiet streets of Clearfield, acquainting the sleepy inhabitants with the fact that the team was "all right," that Captain White was "all right," that Coach Lovering was equally "all right" and that "So play as you may you can't play better than he with a C. H. S. on his sweater!"

On Thursday there was no scrimmage, but instead a hard two hours of drill. Fudge's play was tried, but, since all proceedings were behind closed gates, we are not presumed to know how that child of his fertile brain turned out. Still, merely judging by Fudge's pleased and important expression during the next day or two, it is allowable to suppose that the play proved satisfactory. On Friday the school marched in a body to the field with banners flying and purple megaphones beating time to the strains of "Clearfield's Day" performed by Dahl's Silver Cornet Band—eleven strong—and sung by some hundred and fifty voices. There was no scrimmage, but the two Varsity squads trotted up and down in

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signal work and kicked a few goals—or tried to—(for some reason Morris Brent wasn't given an opportunity to prove his ability)—and the spectators stood up in the stand and cheered and sang at the behest of a boy with a yard-long megaphone and enthusiasm was rampant!

And at the end of twenty minutes or so the Scrub Team, who had finally doffed their uniforms the day before, gathered together in front of the stand and cheered the Varsity, and the Varsity squads joined forces nearby and heartily cheered the Scrubs, and all preliminaries were at last over and the stage was set for the performance!

CHAPTER XXIII

CABLE KICKS OFF

THERE was a final gathering of the council at Dick's that evening, what time the School was conducting its last football mass-meeting in assembly hall. Lanny, Cottrell, Cotner and Tupper attended; and Dick, of course. Tupper had been asked to come since Dick wanted to go over carefully the plays that were to be used in the morrow's game, and it had been decided that in case Lanny was forced to leave the team George Tupper should act as captain. They were all rather serious to-night. Lanny especially, showed the strain. Dick felt it but did not show it. Of the five, Chester Cottrell alone seemed fairly in his usual condition of mind.

Together they went through the game from start to finish, providing as well as they might for every

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contingency. Plays were prescribed for this situation and that, and Chester was put through an examination in the choice of them that would have staggered a less confident youth. One or two doubtful plays which had been placed in the repertory were now stricken out, for somehow this evening their judgment seemed to have found a new clarity.

"Sometimes I think we've got too many plays," observed Dick doubtfully. "But we don't have to use them I suppose."

"The only objection to having a lot is that the fellows are liable to get them mixed," said Lanny. "Still, if we drop 3 and 11 that leaves us only eight 'freaks.'"

"I don't like that word 'freak,'" said Dick, with a smile. "I hope they won't prove 'freaks!'"

"Don't you worry, Dick," replied Chester heartily. "The plays we've got are all right. And you'll find that they'll keep Springdale guessing, too. The only one I'm scared of is that Number 10, the one Fudge calls his 'secret play.'"

"How the dickens did he happen to think that up?" asked Tupper.

"I don't know how he thought of it," replied Chester, "but I don't believe it will work, fellows."

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"It isn't expected to work more than once," answered Dick, "and then, as you understand, Chester, only under certain conditions that may not happen. I've mulled it over a lot, and I realize that it's risky, but if we pull it off—or try to—we'll be where it's going to be necessary to take a risk. And, after all, fellows, more games are lost by avoiding risks than by taking them."

"If it comes to that," said Lanny, "we won't have anything to lose by that play if it goes wrong. It's to be used on third down, you know."

"Sure, but wouldn't another play be more certain?" asked Chester.

"A forward pass?" inquired Lanny.

"Not necessarily. That direct pass to fullback for an end run, for instance. That's a hard play to size-up because it's hidden until the runner gets started. I like that play and I think it's going to work any number of times. But this 'Secret Play,' as you call it——"

"I don't call it that; I call it Number 10," remonstrated Dick.

"Well, whatever you call it, I don't see what's to keep Springdale from tearing through on it and smothering it 'way behind our line."

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"Well, you saw how it went yesterday," said Lanny.

"I didn't see it tried out before an opponent," answered Chester dryly. There was silence for a moment. Then:

"Well, if you fellows think it isn't going to make good, cut it," said Dick. "I may be all wrong about it. And, as Chester says, we didn't have a chance to try it in a scrimmage."

"Mind you," said Chester, "I haven't got cold feet on it. That is, I'll try it, all right, and make it go if it can be done. Only thing I say is that I don't see how it's going to fool the other fellow!"

"As Dick says," observed Lanny, "it's a risk, but we've got to take risks to-morrow. I say use it."

"All right. That's good enough for me," agreed Chester cheerfully. "If it does go, it'll go hard; I'll say that for it!"

After the others had gone, bidding him good night rather soberly on the porch, Dick took himself to bed. But sleep didn't come readily to-night. There was too much to think of. He wondered over and over if he had done wisely here or well there, wondered for the hundredth time if his plans, his methods, his strategies were to be crowned with

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success. He wondered whether the team was really as good as it had seemed to him yesterday, even this afternoon. There were moments, as, tossing back and forth on his pillow, he heard eleven and twelve o'clock strike, when it seemed to him that nothing but certain defeat impended, that there was not the smallest chance in the world for a Clearfield victory! That wasn't a pleasant vigil that Dick kept up there under the roof that night.

Some time after twelve he fell asleep, but only to turn and mutter for a long while after as his tired mind evolved dream after dream in all of which misfortune pursued him relentlessly.

When he awoke the world was gray and cold, with a foretaste of snow in the air, and he found nothing in the outlook to inspirit him. But a cold bath set sluggish blood to tingling again and a cup of steaming-hot coffee brought back courage and determination. While he was looking through the papers the telephone bell rang and he found Manager Cotner on the line, irritated of voice. Springdale had just telephoned over for thirty-five more seats and they didn't have that many unless they could get the workmen out there to put up some temporary ones. The matter was really outside

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Dick's jurisdiction, but George was so perplexed that Dick gave his mind to the problem for a moment.

"There wouldn't be time before two-fifteen to get seats up, George," he answered after an instant's reflection. "Call up Mr. Grayson and see if he will let you have half a dozen rows of chairs from assembly hall. I think he will if you tell him your fix. You can put them along the front of the Springdale section."

That was but the beginning of the telephone's activity. Chester called up next, and after him George Cotner again. George was now in a condition of sputtering wrath. The Springdale manager had just telephoned that Wonson, the man who was to have umpired the game, couldn't officiate, owing to illness, and could Clearfield find some one to take his place. Springdale would be satisfied with any one selected.

"Get right after Mr. Cochran, George. Try the Y.M.C.A. first. If he's not there run around to his house on D Street; the white house near the corner of Lafayette. I think he will do it. How about the seats?"

"They're all right. I'm trying to get hold of

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Stuart now. Sorry to bother you so much, Dick. Good-by."

After that until late afternoon Dick had no chance to be gloomy. He was much too busy.

The team and substitutes gathered at twelve o'clock at the Mansion, the smaller and quieter of Clearfield's two hotels, and had their luncheon. Dick presided and did his best to keep the fellows steady. On the whole there was little indication of nervousness and the meal passed off quite cheerily. At one they adjourned to the upstairs parlor, where, behind closed doors, Dick put them through a final examination in signals. By that time the town showed the presence of the invader. Blue banners and arm-bands and megaphones were in evidence on the streets and the cars coming up Pine Street from the station were well filled. Manager Cotner joined the team, breathless and tired, just before they were ready to start for the field.

"I've just had an awful experience," he gasped as he sank into a chair. "Mr. Grayson telephoned to me for an extra pair of tickets and *wanted to pay for them!* What are we coming to?"

"Did you let him?" laughed Bert Cable.

"No, but the experience quite unnerved me. Coch-

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ran's going to umpire for us, fellows. The Springdale chap's got tonsillitis or laryngitis or bronchitis or—or——"

"Coldfeetitis," suggested Lanny. "Cochran's all right, I guess. What's the time, Dick?"

"Time to go. Are the cars pretty full, George?"

"Jammed! Looks as if all Springdale was here. They're running extras through from the station, though, and I guess we can crowd on. All ready? Come on, then. Gee, but I wish this was over!"

By a quarter past two, when Springdale came on for practice, the stands were nearly filled. The Blue had a section to herself and it was ablossom with waving flags and small white-lettered megaphones. Dahl's Silver Cornet Band, augmented for the occasion to the grand total of fourteen pieces, discoursed sweet—well, discoursed music; let us not be too particular as to the quality of it. Springdale was well represented, Clearfield was there in force. Dick had given tickets to Louise Brent and Mrs. Brent as well as to his sister and mother, and they were seated together in the front of the stand, Louise armed with a silken purple flag.

Five minutes after the Blue team appeared Clearfield's warriors emerged from the dressing-room

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and, Lanny leading, trotted out to warm up. Mr. Newman, the Blue's coach, crossed the gridiron and shook hands with Dick, and the two talked for a minute. Then Mr. Cochran appeared, and, presently the referee, Mr. Lothrop, joined the group. At each end of the field balls were arching over and under the cross-bars, Nelson Beaton and George Tupper trying their kicking feet for Clearfield and Sawtell and Norton for Springdale. Morris Brent, although he had trotted about for a minute with the first squad, had returned to the bench. At two minutes before the half-hour the teams returned to the side lines and Mr. Lothrop walked into the center of the gridiron with Lanny, while from across the field came Captain Torrey, of Springdale. The two leaders shook hands with each other and Torrey with the referee. Then a silver coin gleamed for a moment in the sunlight which since noon had been shining half-heartedly through the sullen clouds, three heads bent over it as it fell, Torrey's hand waved toward the east goal and the little group broke up.

"All right, fellows!" called Lanny cheerfully as he came back to the bench. "We kick off from the west goal. On the run now!"

Blankets and sweaters were dropped and eleven

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purple-stockinged youths raced out to spread themselves across the field. Springdale arranged herself for the kick. A last cheer came from the stand and silence fell.

"All ready, Captain Torrey?" called the referee.

"All ready, Captain White?"

The whistle sounded. Bert Cable, who had teed the ball to his liking, stepped forward and swung his foot and the game was on.

CHAPTER XXIV

BETWEEN THE HALVES

Clearfield

Merrick, l. e.
Partridge, l. t.
Cable, l. g.
Haley, c.
A. Beaton, r. g.
Wayland, r. t.
Felker, r. e.
Cottrell, q. b.
White, l. h. b.
Tupper, r. h. b.
N. Beaton, f. b.

Springdale

Cummings, r. e.
Torrey, r. t.
Furniss, r. g.
Heath, c.
Connell, l. g.
Grey, l. t.
Borden, l. e.
Kelly, q. b.
Sawtell, r. h. b.
Cook, l. h. b.
Norton, f. b.

THAT was the way the teams lined up at the start, with no surprises on either side, unless, possibly, the absence of Brent at fullback could be considered such. But it had been Clearfield's policy all the Fall to put Brent in only when a

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field-goal was called for, and the fact that he did not start the game aroused no suspicion. Morris, blanket-wrapped, sat beside Dick on the Clearfield bench and watched moodily as Sawtell caught the kick-off some dozen yards in front of his goal and sprang forward with the ball. Merrick tried for him and missed and it was Wayland who finally locked his arms about the runner and downed him on the twenty-yard line.

Clearfield applauded the tackle and the teams faced each other. Springdale used a formation in which the ends dropped back a little and the backs made an oblique tandem behind right or left guard. A shift which placed a guard or both guard and tackle on the opposite side of the line was generally used, and sometimes the backs formed behind the long side and sometimes behind the short side, a feature which caused not a little perplexity to Clearfield during the first of the game. A split attack, the first man in the tandem going to the right, the second man straight ahead, followed by the quarter carrying the ball, and the third man to the left, was a favorite play and fooled the opponent many times. Springdale stuck to attacks between tackles all during the first period, punting when unable to gain by

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rushing. Her line was heavy and fast, played low and hard and usually managed to open holes. The backs started from close behind and struck the line almost as soon as the ball was put in play. Springdale's policy was to "get the jump" on her adversary, and it must be acknowledged that she succeeded. The oblique tandem leaped into place just before the ball was snapped and often the play came through while Clearfield was still moving to meet it.

From the twenty-yards to the forty Springdale worked her way without pause, the backs making short but consistent gains between Partridge and Wayland and finding the right side of the Clearfield line the easier proposition. Arthur Beaton was put out of the play time and again, and Dick sent Kent in for him at the end of some five or six minutes. Springdale's supporters were cheering incessantly as the Blue plowed her way toward the middle of the field. Kent bore a message to Cottrell, and Clearfield, who had been playing six men in the line, now dropped her other end back. This allowed both half-backs to close in toward the middle and the next two tries at the center failed.

Still disdaining end runs, Springdale sent Norton back to kicking position and "knifed" her left half

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between guard and tackle on the left. But the fake had not deceived the adversary and Cook was stopped for a slight gain by Tupper. Springdale then punted from the forty-eight yards and the ball went out at Clearfield's twenty-three. It was the Purple's chance to applaud and a hearty cheer went up as the ball was brought in and the teams lined up again. Formation B evidently inspired the opponent with misgiving, for she dropped her backs into a deep basket formation, leaving five men in the line and spreading them well open. Cottrell tried out the other team's defense with a straight plunge at center which went through nicely and followed it by a run off tackle on the left that added three yards. With two to go, Lanny piled through right guard for first down. Springdale brought her backs further in, being convinced that Clearfield's strange arrangement of her backfield did not necessarily foretell a forward pass, and two tries at the left netted the Purple but four yards. Faking a plunge at the center, Cottrell sent Tupper tearing off to the right, but the interference failed and he was stopped near the side line for no gain. Lanny punted to Springdale's forty and Felker downed the catcher in his tracks.

Springdale, her quarter running off his plays like

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lightning, came steadily back. Kent was proving hardly stronger than Arthur Beaton, and many plays went through his position to be stopped by the secondary defense. Lanny played a magnificent defensive game, sensing the point of attack and jumping to meet it. More than once he was literally awaiting the runner when the latter shot through. Springdale was showing a powerful offense and her line-men were playing like veterans, which, with three exceptions they were not. Back past the center of the field the Blue progressed, using old-fashioned football all the time but using it so well that the brunt of the defense was falling to the lot of the Clearfield backs. Springdale got her plays off so quickly and from so close to the line that it was difficult for Clearfield to foretell the point of attack. A penalty for holding set her back but failed to stop her. On Clearfield's forty-two, with four to go on third down, Kelly, the Blue's quarter, again tried a fake-kick, and this time Clearfield failed to size-up the play. Kelly himself plunged through Cable and eluded Lanny for twelve yards and the Blue flags waved riotously in the stand.

The pigskin was now almost on Clearfield's thirty. The Blue's fullback hit the line for three yards, and

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tried again for no gain. A split attack went past Haley for three more and, on the twenty-five-yard line, Kelly again sent Norton back. This time the play was a double pass, and Sawtell got through between Kent and Wayland, the defense having been badly fooled. The tape was used and first down was declared. Before the ball could be put in play again the quarter ended.

The teams traversed the field and lined up again on the twenty yards. Clearfield now played her ends in and spread her backs. Kelly failed to gain at the right and Sawtell made three through the opposite side. Clearfield's supporters were imploring the Purple to hold. Springdale sent Norton back and rushed two backs and an end to the left as the ball was snapped. Norton swung his leg, side-stepped and hurled across to the group. But the throw was short and Felker knocked it down. Again Norton went back, but the ball was passed to Cook and that youth went dodging and spinning through the center. But he was stopped on the fifteen yards and the ball went to the defenders.

Two plunges gained four yards and Lanny kicked from almost under the goal. The ball went low and rolled erratically, finally being dropped on by

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Kelly close to the tee in midfield. Springdale accepted the challenge and punted on second down after a two-yard gain. Cottrell caught on his twenty-four yards and dodged back seven before he was thrown. From kick formation Lanny took the ball around Springdale's right end for five yards. A forward pass was then attempted, Cottrell to Merrick, but Springdale had guessed the play and Merrick failed to make the catch. Lanny punted to the Blue's twenty-seven and Cook brought it back five. Springdale now started at the ends and her first attempt sent Sawtell around Merrick for twelve. A fumble was recovered with a loss of four yards. Norton tried Cable but was thrown back and Cook failed to get through Wayland. Norton punted to the Purple's twenty-six and Lanny fumbled but recovered on the twenty-yard line.

Dick sent Hansard in for Tupper, who was limping badly. Hansard bore instructions to Cottrell to get his plays off faster and an improvement in the speed of the team at once resulted. The teams were well over on the left of the gridiron and Cottrell pulled off the Number 6 play with success. This play brought Merrick running obliquely back from position before the ball went into play, Hansard

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going into the line between guard and tackle on the other side to maintain the required number there. Beaton played back in kicking position. The ball went to Cottrell, however, and he made a two-handed pass to Merrick as the latter swung by between him and Beaton and, with Lanny interfering, raced in a wide arc around his own right wing. Springdale was caught napping and Gordon covered eighteen yards before he was stopped. Enthusiasm took possession of the Clearfield supporters and purple megaphones howled and shrieked.

Springdale was for the moment off her balance, it seemed, for a skin-tackle play on the left, with Lanny hugging the pigskin, went for seven yards. Cottrell speeded up the team and in two plays the ball passed the middle of the field. With three to go on third down, Hansard, keeping his feet wonderfully, fought straight through for six. Springdale tightened then and Lanny was thrown for no gain when he tried the left of the opponent's line. Beaton fell back to kicking position and hurled the ball across the line to Felker. The latter got it but fumbled when tackled and the ball popped into the arms of a Springdale back, who was downed on his thirty-four.

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The rest of the period was Springdale's, for she came back hard and for a time almost drove Clearfield off her feet. Wayland was hurt and gave way to Scott and Springdale replaced her right guard and her left tackle. But there was not time to score by the methods Springdale used. Only twice were runs outside of tackle resorted to, the Blue apparently striving to wear down the Purple's defense by furious assaults. Once Cook nearly got away, but was pulled down from behind by Lanny after he had made almost fifteen yards through the right of the Clearfield line. On the Purple's twenty-eight Springdale made a forward pass to the side of the field, and again, for a breath-taking moment, it seemed that the Blue was about to score. But Cottrell forced the runner over the line at the twenty yards and before Springdale could gain farther the whistle blew, bringing the half to an end.

The Clearfield players trotted to the dressing-room and the visitors retired to a tent in a corner of the field. Cheers and songs started again, the band played its loudest and some twelve hundred spectators excitedly discussed what had happened and predicted what was going to happen. There was no gainsaying the fact that the Blue had shown

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the more consistent offense or that in the matter of punting she had fully equaled the home team. That Clearfield plainly possessed a more versatile attack was allowed, but whether she had plays capable of gaining inside the twenty-yard line was a question, except that, as everyone knew, Brent could be depended on to score from the field provided the line held. Doubtless Clearfield would do her utmost in the next half to reach a position where Brent's science could be used. As to defense, it seemed a toss-up between the Purple and the Blue. Both teams had been well trained in that department. If there was any difference it lay in the fact that Springdale's forwards were a bit quicker at charging, thus leaving less work to the backs. In the two periods played Springdale had made eight first downs to Clearfield's three, not an encouraging showing for the home team.

Perhaps Dick was considering that as he followed the team and substitutes into the dressing-room. At least, he looked sober enough in all truth. Springdale was not showing the signs of overtraining that Dick had more or less counted on, although there had been moments in the last few minutes of the second period when he had thought he could detect

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a falling off in the power of the attack. The removal of two linemen also suggested that the Blue was approaching its limit of endurance. For his own team Dick had no fears. They had stood the hard smashing of the Springdale backs excellently. Not a player had weakened under the strain and none of those taken out had sustained injuries sufficient to prevent his reinstatement. Dick expected the Purple to play better in the next two periods, expected it, in fact, to finish stronger than it had begun, for there was no denying that it had played a slower and more listless game than it had showed against Weston the week before.

While the fellows were being rubbed and having their bruises attended to, Dick conferred with Lanny and Chester Cottrell. Lanny was pretty well keyed-up, Chester unusually grim and silent.

"We've got to have Tupper back, Dick," declared the captain. "Hansard doesn't get into it."

"All right, Lanny. And look here, you've got to hump that line up on defense. Do you get me? They're getting the jump on us every time. What's the trouble?"

"I don't know," replied Lanny rather wildly. "They've been letting every blessed play through on

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us. That's a mean attack of theirs, Dick; you can't size it up."

"I know, but you've got to watch the ball, Lanny. You can't tell where the play's coming by guessing. Another thing, fellows. It won't do to spread your backs too much near goal. Better play your ends well out and force the runner in, and keep your backs behind center. They haven't any running game that we need fear, I think. Of course they'll try to spring something this half, and we'll have to be on the watch for it, but, whatever you do, Lanny, and you, Chester, don't let them score on a line play! They can't if you charge quick and watch the ball. And, Chester, you're not getting your plays off fast enough. I want to see things go twice as fast this half. It's their kick-off this time. Let's see if we can't take that ball straight down the field, fellows. I'll tell you frankly that you haven't been putting up half the game you did against Weston or Lesterville. You've got to wake up and fight, that's what you've got to do. I'm well enough satisfied with what's happened so far. We've let them work themselves pretty tired, I guess, and we've held them off. But for the rest of the game we've got to jump and smear them. We've got to force the fighting, fel-

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lows. Line up quickly, get your signals off quickly and then—" Dick smote a fist into the other hand—"smash into 'em!"

The others nodded, Lanny eagerly, Chester thoughtfully.

"And use your delayed plays more, Chester. Try that Number 8, and if it goes keep on using it. And once near their goal hammer the left side of their line. That new tackle of theirs doesn't look much to me. Stick Beaton through there a few times. Find the weak spot and hammer it flat! But, above all, play fast! You've got to do it!"

Dick turned on his heel and sought Tupper. "How's that knee, George?" he asked.

"All right, Dick!" To prove it, Tupper arose eagerly from the bench and swung his leg. Dick smiled.

"All right. Go in again. But take care of it. And, George, we've got to play faster than we've been playing. See if you can't get more jump into it. Merrick and Felker, here, please!"

For several minutes Dick spoke earnestly and in low tones to the two ends. Then Manager Cotner, who had been keeping track of the time, announced that only four minutes remained, and Dick swung

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himself over to the window and faced the room. The noise died away.

"I'm not going to tell you fellows that you've played good football, because you haven't," began Dick earnestly. "You've let Springdale get the jump on you all through the half. You haven't watched the ball as you should and you've been fooled time after time for that reason alone. You're every bit as good as Springdale, but you don't let them know it. You linemen have let play after play go through you just because you've been watching your opponents instead of the ball. You'll never win that way, fellows. You're putting too much work on the backs. They can't do it all. You've got to keep your eyes on the ball and charge quick and hard. Some of you have been playing much too high. Get down low, and when you charge lift them up. Remember that you're facing men several pounds heavier than you are. The only way to even that up is to play faster than they do. Don't meet them on your side of the line; meet them on theirs!"

"The same thing is true of you backs. You've started slow almost every time. And you've let up when you hit the line. Don't do it! Get your speed before you strike the line and then keep on going!

BETWEEN THE HALVES

I ought not to have to tell you these things at this late day. You know them well enough, but you don't do them. Or you *haven't* done them. You've got to for the rest of the game, though, if you want to win. Some one's going to score this half. It might as well be us. But if it is to be us we've got to play better football. We've got to watch the ball, play like lightning and fight like bear-cats! Springdale is going to tire before long, but she's got a lot of fight in her yet, and you've got to work hard to keep her from winning. I want you fellows to go back there now and start in and everlastingly play football! Wake up and show something! You've got it, fellows, so show it! When you get the ball at the kick-off, hang on to it and take it right down the field and put it over! You can do it if you'll only think so. That's all. Play hard, Clearfield, and fast—*fast*—FAST! Now then: Merrick, Partridge, Cable, Haley, A. Beaton, Scott, Felker, Cottrill, White, Tupper and N. Beaton. All right!"

"On the run, fellows!" cried Lanny.

The door slammed open and out they trailed, the team to throw off their blankets and race into the field and the substitutes to huddle again along the bench and watch and wait. Cheers met them and

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the band started "See, the Conquering Hero Comes," much out of tune, perhaps, but enthusiastically enough to make up for lack of harmony. Clearfield spread itself about the east end of the field and Springdale lined up behind its forty yards while Heath, the center, built up the tee and cocked the ball to his liking. The sun had gone behind the clouds again and a little cold breeze was quartering the field from the northwest, causing spectators to pull rugs around their knees and button coats at the necks and the players to trot about as they waited for the whistle.

"Ready, Captain Torrey?"

"Ready, sir!"

"Ready, Captain White?"

"All ready, sir!"

The whistle blew, Heath strode forward and swung a long leg and the pigskin arched into air again.

CHAPTER XXV

THE SECRET PLAY

TUPPER caught near the side of the field and allowed himself to be forced over at the twenty-yard line. The ball was taken in and Chester Cottrell slapped his hands and barked out his signal:

“White back! 47—68—62!”

Lanny fell back to kicking position, Nelson Beaton taking his place behind left guard, and Chester jumped aside to the right.

“47—68—62!”

Back shot the ball to Chester, off darted Tupper for the guard-tackle hole on the right. Beaton and Lanny swung wide to the left. For a moment the lines heaved and fought. Then, the ball clutched to his stomach, Chester plunged straight ahead and went through where Haley and Arthur Beaton had

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opened a wide hole. The Springdale line had been pulled apart and the secondary defense had been drawn out. Chester slipped away from a tackle and staggered on, dodged past a back and was pulled down finally after ten yards had passed under his feet. The linesmen pulled up their rods and scampered past two white marks and the Clearfield section shouted wildly. Chester, breathless, was pulled to his feet and trotted back to position.

"Regular formation!" he called. "Line up! Get down there, Scott! Signals! 309—25—62!" Lanny jumped to the right in front of Chester. "309—25—62!"

It was Lanny's ball, direct from center, and he sprang at the same hole as before, Tupper clearing it out for him. But only two yards resulted this time. "Second down! Eight to go!" announced the referee.

"Line up quickly!" called Chester. "Here we go now! Regular formation! Signals! 98—99—84! 98—99—1!"

The ball went to Chester, was passed to Nelson Beaton, and that youth struck like a cannon ball at the opposing left guard and tackle hole and piled

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through for four yards. Clearfield was "getting the jump" on her opponent at last!

"Get up! Get up!" shrieked Chester impatiently. "Signals!"

The ball was on Springdale's thirty-six yards now, it was third down and four to go. Lanny pulled Chester's head down and whispered. "Signals!" repeated the latter. "22—53—306! 22—53—!"

Tupper had slipped into the line between right guard and tackle and now Gordon Merrick was running back toward where Nelson Beaton crouched behind Chester. Then came the ball to the latter. Off raced Lanny behind his line toward the right. Chester passed to Gordon and that player, one hand outstretched to ward off attack and the ball in the crook of his right elbow, followed Lanny. The Springdale tackle was boxed and Felker sent a halfback flying out of the path. Then the cry of "*In! In!*" was heard and Gordon, passing behind his interference, sped through an opening in the enemy's front and was laid low for a seven-yard gain.

The middle of the field was in sight now and thus far every play had told. A plunge at the Clearfield right, Beaton carrying the ball, gained three, Lanny

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shot outside of left end for four more, Beaton made two at center and Chester knifed himself through for first down on Springdale's forty-six yards. The Clearfield supporters were cheering incessantly and the bass drum was *thump—thumping* loudly. Springdale was fighting desperately, but the pace was beginning to tell on her.

Time was called for an injury to a Springdale tackle, and when, finally, he was on his feet again, an eager-faced youth was reporting to the referee. "Holman, sir! Left tackle!" The injured player yielded his head-guard and limped off and the new arrival gathered the team about him and for a moment or two there was a whispered conference, interrupted by the referee. Then the panting players faced each other again, the backs crouched behind Cottrell and he piped his signals.

Beaton slammed into the line at left guard and got through for nearly three yards, but Scott had been detected off-side and Clearfield was set back five yards. With fifteen to gain, Lanny tried his own left end, but failed to get past. Beaton hit the center for two on a delayed pass. Lanny got three through left guard. Beaton went back to kicking position and Partridge crossed to the right of the

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line. Cottrell and Tupper moved to protect the punter. Then the ball was snapped to Beaton, who swung his foot, ran half a dozen paces to the right and poised the ball. Cottrell and Tupper guarded his front for a moment and then the latter swung wide to the right toward the side line and Lanny cut through outside tackle and went down the field. Merrick and Felker had also sought positions for the pass, but Felker was guarded. Beaton waited until the last moment and then, just as the Springdale players leaped upon him stepped back a pace and hurled to Lanny who was for the moment unguarded. The throw went over the center of the line, just escaped the upstretched hands of the leaping Blues, and was caught by Lanny nearly twenty yards away. Like a flash he wheeled and set off down the field. But the Springdale quarter was not to be denied and Lanny was pulled down on the Blue's twenty-six yards.

Cheers and shrieks of delight came from the stand. Dick nodded to Morris and that youth arose and walked up and down the side line, his gaze fixed anxiously on the teams. But time had been called for Lanny, who had had his breath pretty well knocked out of him in the tackle, and Dick

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turned tentatively to where McCoy sat further along the bench, blanket-wrapped, his eyes too bent intently on the field. But Lanny was soon up again, and, had you been sitting next to McCoy, you'd have heard a sigh of disappointment.

Chester Cottrell thumped the lineman on the back, hoarsely encouraging and threatening. Lanny pulled his head-guard on again and the whistle shrilled. The backs sprang to their places and Cottrell gave the signal. Tupper received the ball and hurled himself at the right of the line, but the Blue held and there was no gain. Cottrell scolded and raged. A criss-cross sent Lanny three yards through left guard, and it was third down with seven to go, the pigskin on the twenty-three. On the side line Morris was trotting slowly up and down, casting eager, inquiring glances at Dick's inscrutable face.

"Signals!" shrieked Cottrell. "Get into it now, Clearfield! Make this go! Signals! 81—29—61!"

"Watch for a forward!" called the Springdale quarter from under his goal. "Come back, Holman! Break this up, Springdale!"

"81—29—61!"

The ball went to Chester, Lanny and Tupper

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swept to the right and hurled themselves at tackle, Chester, his back to the enemy, hugged the ball. Confusion reigned. The left of the Springdale line broke. Then Beaton sprang ahead, took the ball at a hand-pass, and slid through the center, was tackled, plunged on, fighting and squirming, went down with two Springdale backs on him and finally grunted "Down!" The whistle blew and the referee sprang at the pile-up and heeled the spot. "Fourth down!" he called. "Two to go!"

On the side line Morris tugged at his sweater and cast an impatient look at Dick. But the latter shook his head and Morris walked back to the bench and sat down again.

"They've got two yards to go, Dick," he said doubtfully.

"Yes, and they can do it, Morris. Your time will come. Wait."

And do it they did, Lanny himself squeezing through between center and left guard for just enough to secure first down. The ball was now on the thirteen yards and Clearfield was yelling like so many Comanche Indians, while steady cheers for Springdale rolled across the field. Cottrell hurried the fellows back into place, called his sig-

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nal and hurled Beaton at left tackle. Two yards resulted. Springdale was stiffening now under the shadow of her goal. Beaton was yanked to his feet, and hobbled back to position.

“98—49—32!”

The lines set and the backs crouched.

“98—49—32!”

Back came the ball, Lanny and Tupper plunged at the left of the line, Beaton sprang forward and—

“*Ball! Ball!*” cried Chester. Beaton had fumbled! A Springdale lineman hurled himself past with a mighty rasping of canvas and plunged forward. Chester was tossed aside. A muffled voice called “Down!” and the whistle blew.

“Springdale’s ball!” cried the referee. “First down! Ten to go!”

A groan of disappointment arose from the Clearfield stand, but the blue pennants waved mightily and two hundred Springdale voices burst into wild acclaim. Beaton, with miserable face, hung his head as the Blue’s quarter took command. But Lanny shouted encouragement:

“Never mind that, fellows! Let’s get it back! Now play, play!”

Springdale hurled her fullback through for a

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scant three, made two more around the left end and then punted from under her goal. Her line held fast and the ball went flying up the field to Cottrell, who made a fair catch on the thirty-eight yards.

Then the journey back began. Lanny got through the left for four yards and Beaton was stopped for no gain. Then the quarter came to an end. Dick sent Kent in for Arthur Beaton, Todd for Partridge and Toll for Felker.

A minute later the teams lined up once more on the Blue's thirty-four yards. On the next play Springdale was caught off-side and Clearfield gained five yards. Lanny tried a wide run around left end and made a scant three yards. With three to go on fourth down, Lanny punted. The ball went over the line and was brought back to the twenty. Springdale made first down in three plays through Cable. The latter was hurt and Robey went in for him. A forward pass, following an unsuccessful try at center, gained six and Sawtell added two past Scott. Norton went back, but the ball was passed to left halfback and that player got around Merrick for four, securing first down on his own forty-three yards.

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Springdale pulled her line apart and scattered her backs to the right of center across the field. Clearfield shifted to meet the formation. The ball went to left half on a long pass from center and he raced around the short side of his line. But he only made three on the play. A fake-kick resulted in a try at a forward, but Merrick broke it up, and, with seven to go on fourth down, Springdale punted to the Purple's twenty-four. Lanny caught and got back eight yards before he was stopped. Cottrell again tried a delayed pass, but the enemy got through and downed Beaton for a loss of two yards. A criss-cross made five through right tackle. On the next play Cottrell took the ball for a try around right end but was pulled down behind his line, and it was fourth down with nine to go. Cottrell was plainly used-up and Dick sent in Hull. Chester received a fine ovation as he came off.

Hull, after a conference with Lanny, sent Beaton back and the ball went to Tupper, who squirmed through outside left tackle and, evading tacklers, managed to make it first down near the side line. Hull displayed a lot of ginger and the plays began to go off faster. With Lanny back in kicking position, a straight plunge by Beaton took the ball to the

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middle of the field. Lanny secured the needed two yards past left tackle.

Hull failed at a run around his own right wing and on the next play got off a fine lateral pass to Merrick, who made eight yards before he was thrown. Beaton plugged the center for four and a first down. A fumble was recovered by Beaton for a loss of six yards, but to offset that Springdale was detected holding in the line and the ball went back again. A forward pass from delayed play, Beaton to Tupper, almost got that youth free for a touchdown, but the Springdale quarter stopped him on the Blue's twenty-seven. Three tries gained but four yards and Beaton hurled to Merrick. But the throw was short and a Springdale end got the ball and ran it back to the thirty-six.

Springdale failed to gain in two attempts and punted to Lanny. After romping half-way across the field he was pulled down for no gain. Lanny tried the left end and made two, Beaton failed to get through right guard and Lanny punted to Springdale's thirty-three yards. Springdale put in three new linesmen and a substitute fullback. McCoy went in for Tupper. There was six minutes to play now. Springdale was no longer able to

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gain through the line and tried wide-formation attacks, with the runner hunting a hole wherever he could find it. She gained on two such plays and made first down on a forward pass. She was showing the strain now and her forwards were weakening. Another attempt at a forward pass from her forty-five-yard line failed and she punted to the Purple's thirty. Hull caught and squirmed and dodged back through half the opposing team, being finally halted on his forty-eight yards.

Time was now nearly up. Dick sent in Bryan for Merrick and Brimmer for Haley. Haley had been pretty badly used and was distinctly groggy as he was led off. Bryan brought instructions and the Purple players gathered in a group and listened to them. The linesman announced four minutes to play as the teams faced each other once more. Hull sent McCoy at the center and gained four, sent the same player against the right of the line and made two. Then Lanny sped past left tackle and barely gained first down on the opponent's forty-two yards. Beaton fought through center for three. Then, with Beaton back, Number 8 was tried again and Toll caught the pass for a twelve-yard gain and almost got free for a run. Clearfield's supporters were on

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their feet now, imploring a touchdown, and Springdale was cheering steadily, doggedly. Springdale put in a fresh center and a new left half, and Dick substituted Arthur Beaton for Kent.

With the pigskin just back of the Blue's twenty-eight yards, near the right side line, Hull sent McCoy around the long-field end for a scant gain of two yards. Then Beaton made four between left guard and center. A delayed pass, with Lanny carrying, added three. With Lanny back in kicking position, Hull himself took the pigskin past right tackle for two and made it first down on Springdale's seventeen.

On the bench Dick nodded to Morris.

Beaton tried the left of the Blue's line and secured a scant yard. Springdale called time and administered to her right guard. Lanny attempted to get past left tackle but was pushed back. Springdale again asked for time. And as the whistle blew a sudden cheer burst from the Clearfield section. On to the field raced two purple-stockinged warriors. One was Chester Cottrell and the other Morris Brent. Springdale in imagination saw the game slip from them then. It would be no trick for Brent to drop or place-kick from the seventeen-yards.

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"All right, Perry," called Chester. "Sorry! Let's have that head-guard."

The players clustered around Morris and thumped him ecstatically. Perry Hull trotted disconsolately off and the whistle blew again. Clearfield sprang back to position. Beaton, following Hull from the field and dragging his feet wearily as he went, offered a jumbled, inarticulate prayer for victory.

"All right now, Clearfield!" shouted Chester cheerily. "Here's where we score! Everyone into this hard!"

On the bench, Fudge Shaw, taking the place beside Dick left vacant by Morris, whispered nervously: "Is he g-g-going to t-t-t-try it now, D-D-Dick?"

Dick, his hands clutching his crutches tensely, his face rather white and strained, nodded without turning. Fudge gave vent to a huge sigh.

"Gee!" he muttered fervently. "I hope it g-g-goes!"

Then Cottrell's voice came sharply across the field again:

"Brent back! Left tackle over!"

Morris slowly retreated to kicking distance.

"*Block this!*" shouted Springdale. "*Block this kick! Get through and block it!*"

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Chester followed Morris back and knelt in front of him. "All right?" he asked, looking up.

Morris nodded, shuffling on his feet. Chester patted the ground with his hand. Morris looked for an instant at the cross-bar and edged back another foot or so.

"A little more this way," he said.

"*Block this, Springdale!*" implored the Blue's quarter, dodging back and forth behind the line.

"All right," said Morris.

Quiet fell over the field. The Clearfield linemen crouched. Lanny, behind his own left guard, poised tensely. Across from him, Tupper stood ready to guard the kicker. Todd was between Beaton and Wayland on the right of the line. Chester, facing the left, one knee on the ground, held his hands toward the center.

"Signals!" he shouted briskly. "44—18—110!"

Morris gave a final look at the cross-bar. The enemy, panting, gasping, swayed restively.

"44—18—110!"

"*Block it! Block it!*" shrieked the defenders.

Back sped the ball to Chester's outstretched hands. The lines heaved. Canvas rasped against canvas, bodies strained, cries and grunts from labored lungs

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made pandemonium for a moment. Morris stepped and swung his leg. Half a dozen blue-clad arms reached in air. The Springdale right end broke through, but met Lanny and went hurtling aside toward the line. And then, just as the Springdale forwards came charging through, Chester, the ball snuggled in the crook of his left elbow, sprang up and darted straight ahead toward the left of the field!

Ahead of him ran Lanny, but Lanny had little to do. Springdale was tricked. There had been not the slightest doubt in the mind of any of them but that Brent's appearance at that moment meant a try for goal. The line, from end to end, had been intent upon but one thing, and that was to break through at any cost and block the kick. Strengthening the right of the Clearfield line had drawn an extra Springdale back to that side and now Chester was in slight danger of being stopped. Lanny threw himself in front of the Springdale quarter and sent that frantic youth rolling head over heels, and Chester, striking in toward the goal line, crossed it without opposition! It was not until he was almost behind the nearer post that hostile arms dragged him to earth and he was smothered by angry blue-stockinged defenders!

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Cheers thundered from the stand, the bass drum thumped a pæan of victory, caps and megaphones sailed into the air, and, on the bench, a round-faced youth sat silent in wondering and awed delight. The Secret Play had won!

Two minutes later Nelson Beaton, racing back to the field, kicked the goal that added another point to that glorious 6, and forty seconds after that the final whistle shrilled and George Cotner, snatching the ball from the umpire, raced into the throng with it, dodging the ecstatic youths who, flowing onto the field, were capturing the players and raising them shoulder-high while the band played unheard and a babel of voices proclaimed Clearfield's victory!

Ten minutes later still, when Toby Sears was standing perilously on the railing of the grandstand leading the cheers, a hoarse voice demanded "Lovering! We—want—Coach—Lovering!" The demand was multiplied by two hundred voices, and willing emissaries darted away in search of him. But they didn't find him. Dick, a contented smile on his face, was blocks away, chugging home in Eli.

THE END

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